

Seminary profs discuss afterlife: the doctrines of heaven and hell

By Trennis Henderson

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP) — It's been a long time since you heard a fire-and-brimstone sermon. The same goes for the pearly gates and the streets of gold.

Emphasis on heaven and hell has declined because mainstream Protestant ministers "simply don't believe in the afterlife themselves, either the biblical view or any view," said Douglas Stuart, an evangelical theologian at Gordon-Conwell Seminary in South Hamilton, Mass.

Stuart was among several theologians quoted in the March 27 issue of Newsweek magazine on the subjects of heaven and hell.

While a recent Newsweek poll found that 94 percent of Americans believe God exists and 77 percent believe in a heaven, the article added, "Today, hell is theology's H-word, a subject too trite for serious scholarship."

While such statements may accurately reflect the views held in some religious circles today, several Southern Baptist theologians note Baptists as a whole continue to affirm the realities of heaven and hell.

Pollster George Gallup Jr., who conducted the Newsweek poll, told Word & Way, Missouri Baptists' weekly newsjournal, the Newsweek article overstated the case concerning ministers' rejection of a belief in heaven and hell.

Noting that the poll's results among evangelical Christians provided an entirely different perspective, he said affirmation of heaven and hell among evangelical pastors is even more widespread than among church members.

Questioning people who claim that a belief in heaven and hell violates one's intellectual integrity, Larry McSwain, theology school dean at Southern Seminary in Louisville, insisted: "You can't have intellectual integrity and not believe in heaven and hell. The evidence for hell is so overpowering when one examines the inhumanity to human beings which has been perpetrated in this century alone. The idea of overwhelming sin without punishment is intellectually absurd."

"Likewise, if there be no afterlife and no promise of heaven, to quote Scripture, 'our faith is in vain.'"

"Neither heaven nor hell can be proven scientifically, but both are logically required, given the nature of human experience."

William Tolar, McSwain's counterpart at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, said, "If a questionnaire were sent out to Baptist pastors and Baptist people, I think they would affirm overwhelmingly the reality of both heaven and hell."

Vernon Davis, dean of the faculty at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, agreed that the doctrines of heaven and hell are "clearly grounded in Scripture and in the history of the church as a whole, and especially within our Baptist heritage."

Despite the strong biblical emphasis on the realities of both heaven and hell, the professors agreed that many people find the doctrine of hell particularly difficult to accept.

Davis noted the reality of heaven is easier for many people to believe because "they simply want to believe in heaven." By contrast, he added, "there are many reasons for them to

resist a belief in hell.

"They do not like to think about the implications of this for friends and loved ones who are not believers."

"They simply do not want to take as seriously as the New Testament does the reality of individuals' responsibility for their use of their freedom in this life."

Tolar explained that another reason some people reject a belief in hell is because of their concept of God as love. "They tend to define and isolate God as love as if love excluded justice," he said. "But the Bible teaches that God is just, as sure as it teaches that he is love. The Bible teaches that God's love is a just love that would not preclude such a place as hell."

Each of the Southern Baptist theologians voiced similar views about the definitions of heaven and hell.

They agreed the greatest horror of hell is eternal separation from God, while the greatest blessing of heaven is spending eternity in God's presence.

Quoting the Apostle Paul's assertion that "to live is Christ and to die is gain," Robert Culpepper noted, that "heaven is where Christ is."

Culpepper, professor of theology at Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, said the most significant aspect of heaven for him is the opportunity "to be with the Lord." Conversely, he described hell as alienation, separation, and anguish.

Davis emphasized: "Heaven is the state of believers in the presence of God after death. Hell is the destiny of persons apart from Christ; a place of separation and punishment."

"The basic truth about heaven is that it is where salvation is fulfilled and where Christ is present clearly with his people. The primary thing about hell is that it is the experience of existence apart from God or any redemptive influence."

Focusing on the range of interpretations among Southern Baptists, Tolar explained: "Many Baptists, both pastors and people, would see the golden streets and pearly gates as more symbolic and figurative, whereas you would find another spectrum of Southern Baptists espousing literalism where there would have to be real gold and real pearls."

"The same is true of hell. I know fire may simply symbolize torment, while others would insist it is a literal fire that you literally feel."

Noting the difference between popular thought and theological examination, Davis added: "A person in the pew might really be convinced that if you don't believe in literal streets of gold, you don't believe in heaven as the Bible teaches it, whereas in a seminary setting, you try to go behind any of the descriptions and symbols to see what the theological reality is. The idea of beauty and the experience of the continuing presence of Christ — these would be seen as the basic theological concepts of heaven."

"The majority of Southern Baptists would tend to fall along a fairly traditional interpretation of the reality of heaven as the promise of eternal life with the Father beyond this life," McSwain said.

Concerning hell, he added, "There would probably be more diversity of

opinion on the nature of hell, but the majority of Southern Baptists would see hell as a place of punishment, with separation from the presence of God in the world to come, in an eternal, everlasting sense."

Culpepper remarked that another reason for a decreased emphasis on heaven and hell is simply that "many people are too immersed in the affairs of this life to give much concern to the affairs of the other life."

Acknowledging "more emphasis upon the present experience of salvation in Christ," Culpepper added, "We probably do not put as much em-

phasis on the negative aspect, that is to try to scare people out of hell, as we have in former days."

Tolar affirmed, "My reason for believing in heaven and hell is because of biblical revelation and my view of Scripture and its inspiration."

Regardless of one's interpretations of the scriptural accounts of heaven and hell, McSwain insisted: "One ultimately has to make a leap of faith . . ."

Once the faith response has been made, it's difficult to be a person of faith and deny these realities . . . I can't prove that there's a heaven; I

can't prove that there's a hell, but I can affirm both.

"If you looked at all the pews across Southern Baptist life, I think you would find very high levels of commitment to belief in heaven and hell," he related.

Describing those beliefs, he added, "I don't think human language can improve on the Bible's description of heaven nor could human language improve on the horrors of living apart from God as one finds in the Bible's description of hell."

Trennis Henderson is associate editor of the Missouri Word and Way.

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Missions in Haiti

Suttles feels placed right, despite nearby gunfire

By Eric Miller

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (BP) — Soldiers were firing guns a mile away, but Southern Baptist missionary Virgil Suttles said he's convinced he's where God wants him to be.

The violence on Haiti, a Caribbean nation that shares the island of Hispaniola with the Dominican Republic, does not bother Suttles as much as the lack of hope, he said in an April 6 telephone interview.

Haitians have seen their presidency change hands four times, sometimes with bloodshed, since November 1987. That is when Suttles and his wife, Patsy, and children, Paul, 13, and Kelli, 8, arrived in the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. They are from Elberton, Ga.

Haitian army officers tried unsuccessfully to overthrow their government again in early April. More than 30 soldiers and several civilians were reported killed during the fighting.

Schools and businesses were shut down as tension mounted and a state of emergency was declared. Nearly everybody "stayed put" in homes, except for soldiers who occasionally rode around and fired guns into the air, Suttles said.

The latest unrest came as Haitian Baptists were starting to feel more positive about life, Suttles said. He has been working with Haitians "to try to build up some hope in their minds." But violence "just fans the fire of fatalism — the ruling mindset of this country," he said.

"That's life in Haiti," say Haitians when unrest occurs. But Suttles is urging Haitians, especially fellow Bap-

tists, to "become more God-centered and less man-centered, and to realize God is a loving God and not just a God who is far removed. We're not all down here like puppets on a string."

The Suttleses and Southern Baptist missionaries Mark and Peggy Rutledge have seen the Baptist Con-

vention of Haiti progress over the past two years as it established a program of church growth and long-range planning. As part of the growth program, Suttles is visiting the 600 Baptist churches to encourage more unity among them.

Eric Miller writes for the FMB.



A healthier wave

Favio Zelaya waves to his friends at Mississippi Baptist Medical Center as he prepared to depart home on April 21. The nine-year-old Honduran boy underwent extensive heart surgery on March 7. Bill Gibson, MBMC general surgeon, Terry Bailey, general practitioner of Canton; and Leroy Howell, general practitioner of Starkville, and his wife Earlene, left, brought Favio to Jackson from Honduras so that the surgery could be performed. Thomas Kilgore, right, MBMC cardiovascular surgeon; Robert Abney, MBMC pediatrician; and Edwin Dodd, MBMC anesthesiologist, also offered their services, which drastically improved Favio's quality of life. The arrangements were made by Global Outreach, Inc., of Tupelo.

Editorials . . . by Don McGregor

Associations and missions

Baptists long ago determined that better, more effective, and more efficient work could be performed through cooperation than churches could hope to accomplish through their own efforts only.

Thus associations were formed.

Associations predate the Southern Baptist Convention by 138 years and the first one was formed in Philadelphia, Pa., in 1707.

The reason for being for associations is missions. For that reason the chief administrator of association work generally is called the director of missions. The association is the front line of missions work, and it is the most efficient. In the associations, usually, those who are called on to do the missions work are not paid professionals. The churches get together and do it themselves.

As the organizational structure moves along in the Southern Baptist framework, the numbers get larger and larger, meaning that the percentages of those involved in the work become smaller and smaller. In the association, everyone is involved. Of course, in some super associations with super churches, the chances of being involved are lessened. There

are associations that are larger than some state conventions. But in the more normal grouping of churches that we know as the association, the outside interest of and the need for the help of everyone is greater.

One of the greatest ministries of the association is that of the director of missions as he works among the pastors. As pastors face frustrations and hurts, it is much easier for the associational director of missions to recognize the need and tend to it than it is in any other area of Southern Baptist life.

Association is a better name than convention. A convention lasts three days, and its over. In the meantime there is the staff of a convention board or an executive committee that is carrying on the work. Though we speak of the Southern Baptist Convention as though it were an ongoing concept, it is not. What we have is 37,000 individual and independent churches that voluntarily cooperate with each other in monetary terms to hire a professional staff to do the work.

The association is just that. The churches of the era are continuing to associate with each other the year around to do what needs to be done.

The association is not a small piece

of a state convention. It is an independent and autonomous grouping of churches banded together for missions work. It has to be independent and autonomous because the churches that make it up are independent and autonomous.

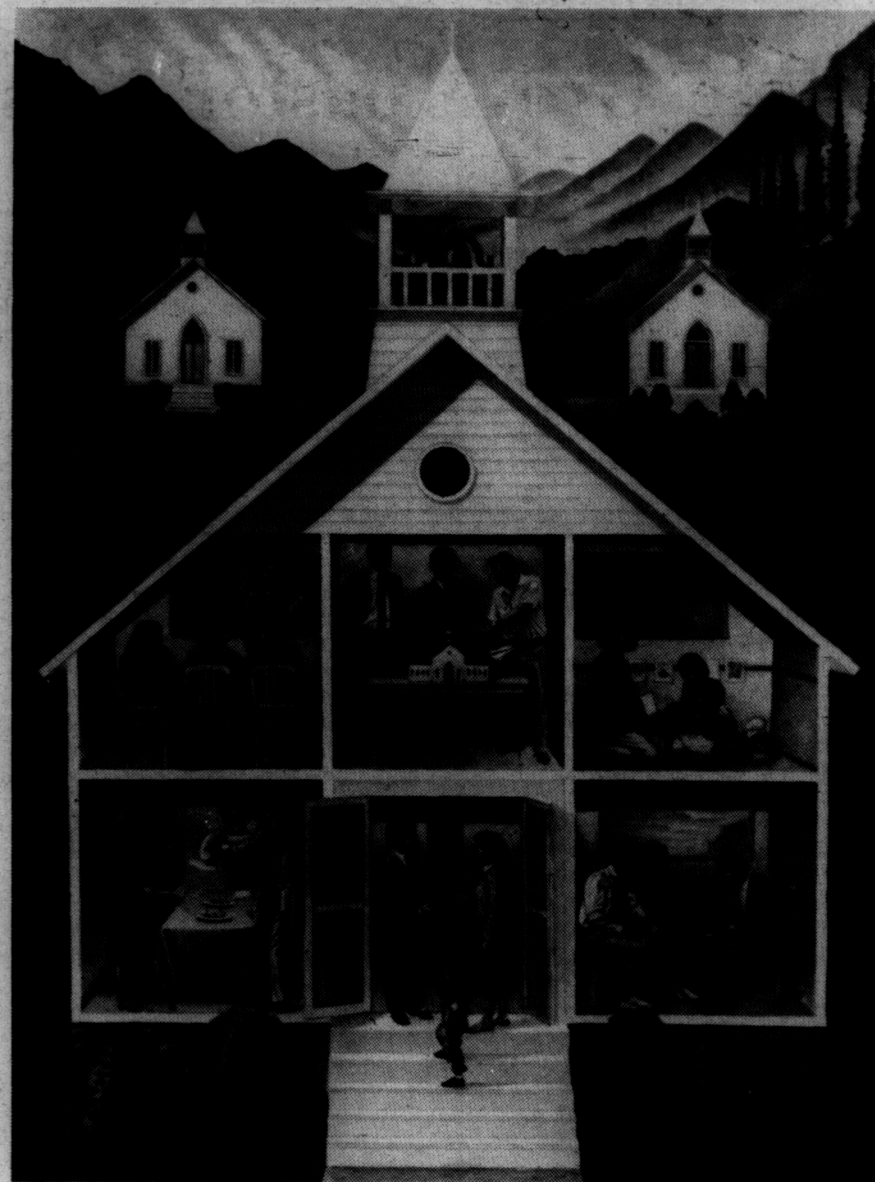
On the other hand, just about all work that is done by the state convention within the state, including cooperative endeavors with the Home Mission Board, is done through cooperation with the local association. Thus the association is the first line of missions work on its own behalf and is also the first line of missions work as is carried on by the state convention.

May 22 to 28 is Associational Emphasis Week. That is a time to renew affiliation with and support of the work of associational missions.

There are 74 associations in Mississippi. For the most part, they have adopted the names of the counties except where multiple counties are joined into one association — and sometimes even then. The theme for the week is "The Baptist Association: Churches Laboring Together with God."

We need that togetherness.

The Baptist Association:



Churches laboring together with God

Baptist beliefs . . .

Security of the believer (I)

By Herschel H. Hobbs

"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." — Galatians 5:4

This is a favorite verse to those who believe that you can be saved and then be lost again. However, the effort to sustain this view from this verse is to interpret it out of context. If this is what Paul means, then he contradicts everything else he says in this epistle.

Galatians was written to refute the Judaizers who said that to be saved Gentiles must first become Jews in religion by being circumcised and living by the Mosaic law — and then believe in Jesus for salvation. Throughout this letter Paul contrasts salvation by law plus faith and salvation by grace through faith (Gal. 5:1-6).

"Is become of no effect" translates a verb meaning to render inoperative. Christ is not in the business of saving people by law or legalism (even one's self-devised code of conduct; note "law," no definite article in Greek text). "Are justified" should read "seeking to be justified." For those seeking to be justified or declared righteous in the sphere of law, Christ has no part. It is an attempt at self-salvation.

Now what about "ye are fallen from grace"? A person is seeking to be saved. He must choose either the law way or the grace way; he cannot go both ways. If he chooses the law road he falls out of or away from the grace

road. And Christ saves only by grace. It is not a case of being in grace and then falling from grace. It means that

such a person was never in grace. Herschel Hobbs is pastor emeritus of First Church, Oklahoma City.

Hymns Baptists sing . . . "All creatures of our God and King"

By William J. Reynolds

Francis of Assisi was afflicted with illness and temporary blindness in the hot summer of 1225 in San Damiano, Italy. He sought refuge from the heat in a straw hut. Adding to the discomfort of the heat and his physical aches and pain, a swarm of field mice moved in to share his hut.

It is almost beyond belief that under these circumstances Francis could praise God. But in that hut he wrote a magnificent poem entitled "Cantic of the Creatures," the basis of the English translation "All Creatures of Our God and King."

The son of a wealthy Italian cloth merchant, Francis was born in Assisi in 1182. As a young man he experienced a number of unusual events. He saw visions and heard voices that others did not see or hear.

Once when he visited the ruins of a church, he heard a voice say, "Repair my house." He returned home, and, without his father's knowledge, he

took much cloth from the warehouse, sold it, and repaired the church.

Renouncing material goods and family ties, Francis embraced a life of poverty. He loved all nature and found great joy in the handiwork of God. Birds and animals were his friends, and he called them his "brothers" and "sisters."

For the Christmas services in the little community of Greccio in Italy in 1223, Francis sought a more vivid way to portray the Christmas story. He built a life-size manger scene and placed a statue of the Christ-child on the manger hay. Borrowed farm animals were brought to stand nearby, creating a living picture of what occurred at Bethlehem. This tableau became a tradition that continues in our day and is credited to Francis of Assisi.

William J. Reynolds is professor of church music at Southwestern Seminary.

Take care of our children

Annually at Mother's Day Mississippi Baptists consider the 600 or so children under our care through an offering taken through the churches. We care for our children through the auspices of the Mississippi Baptist Children's Village. Mother's Day is May 14.

These are our children, not in the same sense but just as surely as those who have grown up or are now growing up in our homes. They are children who for one reason or another have no other place to go. So we are caring for them.

One might say that the folks at Mississippi Baptist Children's Village are doing a magnificent job in providing care and sustenance for these young people, and that is true to the fullest extent. They can't do it alone, however. If we don't help them, it will not be done at all.

One might say that we are helping them all of the time and month by month through the Cooperative Program, and that is also true. The Village must have the dependable and steady income from the Cooperative Program in order to know there will be a sure source of financing, but it is not nearly enough. The costs of food, clothing, medical and dental ex-

penses, school supplies, the total education process, transportation, and other such expenses for the children are very high. Then there's staff salaries, maintenance, and overhead expenses to consider.

A couple of weeks ago these pages noted a temporary shortage of funds that was causing an immediate need ahead of the Mother's Day Offering. Hopefully, help was available. The time is now for the regular Mother's Day Offering. It should be given through the church and marked as the Mother's Day Offering for the Children's Village.

And by the way, there is a new address. The one presented in the editorial calling for the special gifts was the one in the current Mississippi Baptist Diary, but there has been a change. The Village has been changed from a Jackson address to a Clinton address. It is still in the same place, but the address has been changed.

The new address for the Mississippi Baptist Children's Village is P. O. Box 27, Clinton, Miss. 39060-0027.

It would be well to make a permanent record of this.

And use it immediately to send gifts to take care of our children.

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1,372 decisions

Pine Grove pastor goes on mission to Mindoro

NOTE: Terry Ledbetter went on a preaching mission to the Philippines earlier this year, along with three other men. In different areas, they report they preached to 14,942 people, with 5,495 public professions of faith. Pine Grove Church, Dumas, where Ledbetter is pastor, made it possible for him to make the trip. During the 11 days of his preaching, 1,372 responded to the gospel message.

By Terry Ledbetter

We arrived in Manila and proceeded to the home of Bob Tebow. Bob and his team arranged for us to preach in towns and schools during my stay. After spending the night, Bob and I left for the island of Mindoro.

Monday morning came and we were prepared for the meeting that night. Bob preached and, praise the Lord, about 60 people came to know Christ as personal Savior. I preached for the next two weeks, as Bob left for Mindanao early Wednesday.

Hiking across a mountain for two hours in order to preach was a great experience, as was waking up to find two chickens roosting on my midsection. The greatest experience, however, was when I preached, and hundreds indicated their desire to follow Christ.

One night we were setting up to show a film, and one of the Christian men who was helping brought two women to tell me they wanted to receive Christ, but that they wanted to do it publicly, so all could know. That night over 100 came to receive Christ.

Another great experience was when we preached at one of the schools in a nearby community. It was glorious to see the principal, who gave us permission to preach, along with six teachers and hundreds of students, come to know Christ.

Everywhere I preached, I had an interpreter by the name of Benji. One thing that really impressed me about the ministry there was their determination to do follow-up on the new

Christians. Even though things may be politically unstable and threats are often made, they continue to be bold in sharing the gospel and discipling the new converts.

Most days were spent preaching only once or twice, due to the distance that we travelled to the night meetings. During the free time in the mornings, however, Benji and I would visit on his church field, seeking to encourage the new Christians. Benji started a church in his town and is working diligently to grow it as God would have it to be.

After crossing one mountain by foot, we arrived at a village on the seashore. This would be the place we would stay for the night, sleeping on bamboo floors. After resting, we continued by foot carrying all the equipment on our backs up another mountain to a village in order to preach that night. One person that helped carry the equipment was a teenage girl. She went up the mountain without Christ in her life, but because of her decision to receive Christ, when we journeyed back down that night, she was a changed person because Christ was in her heart.

One of my favorite meetings was in the remote village of Manga. This village was known for the drunkards who lived there and the trouble makers. There were about 80 people present that night in the rain. After the Gospel was preached, two came to receive Christ: a 35 and an 80 year old man. Of course, I had hoped for more to be saved, but this indicated two things: first, the stony ground we were dealing with and, secondly, the boldness of at least two that stood up to say, "we know we have sinned and need a Saviour." We praised God for Manga, and for those that indicated a desire to follow Christ during the eleven days of ministry.

Terry Ledbetter is the pastor of Pine Grove Baptist Church in Dumas, Ms.



Sticky business

Desert plant life is a highlight of the Ethel M Botanical Gardens near Las Vegas, Nev. The gardens contain one of the largest collections of cacti and desert flora in the West. Inside, visitors view another sticky subject — a chocolate fac-

tory. Numerous tourist attractions will greet Southern Baptists who will convene in the city June 13-15 for their annual meeting. (BP photo courtesy Las Vegas News Bureau)

The Second Front Page

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Mercer trustees to drop liberal arts in Atlanta

By Audrey Post

MACON, Ga. (BP) — Mercer University's trustees have voted to close the Georgia Baptist institution's liberal arts school in Atlanta June 30, 1990.

Mercer owns campuses in Macon and Atlanta and operates separate liberal arts schools on both locations.

About 60 faculty and more than 700 students will be affected by the decision. Faculty previously sued the university to save the jobs of eight faculty members who had been notified of their impending dismissals. Faculty now expect to add amendments to their legal complaint, and students announced they will join the faculty in taking legal action against the university.

Opting to reduce the university's

deficit over the next five years instead of immediately, the trustees also voted to convert the northeastern Atlanta campus into a graduate and professional center.

The plan includes moving the pharmacy school from downtown Atlanta to the northeastern campus, then selling the downtown property. Mercer's two business schools will be combined, with the undergraduate business program based in Macon and the graduate program and some upper division courses based in Atlanta.

In other business, trustees read a resolution from the university's House of Delegates, which represents faculty from all nine colleges or schools, expressing the faculty's lack of confidence in President R. Kirby

Godsey's administration and calling for new leadership. And two trustees resigned, citing the board's continuing support of Godsey.

Also contributing to this story was William Neal, associate editor of Georgia Baptists' Christian Index. Post is a staff writer for the Macon Telegraph and News.

Ed. Commission begins reports to WCC trustees

The Mississippi Baptist Education Commission has made a preliminary report of its findings of an investigation into the administration of William Carey College.

Bill Stewart, chairman of the commission, told the Baptist Record that the first report was made Monday to a closed meeting of the full Carey trustee board.

The investigation began last November when Carey trustees asked the commission to look into allegations by a minority group of trustees. The allegations were of fiscal and administrative mismanagement.

Stewart said the investigation was not yet complete but would not speculate as to its completion date. Carey President J. Ralph Noonkester has promised that the results of the investigation will be made public.

Academic quality asked for WFU divinity school

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (BP) — Trustees of Wake Forest University here approved the concept of a divinity school, but instructed administrators to make certain that adequate financial support is available before taking additional steps.

State Annie gifts increase

As of April 30, Mississippi Baptists had given \$1,073,761.83 to home missions through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, according to Marjean Patterson, director of Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union.

This is an increase of \$214,722.40, or 25 percent, over the offering at the end of April in 1988.

Said Patterson, "Traditionally, the month of May is a big one for Annie Armstrong receipts at the Baptist Building business office. Let's hope it will be so this year as church treasurers send in the offering from their churches."

Resources must be secured equivalent to the income from a \$15 million endowment, according to the April 14 trustee action.

The divinity school will not be launched until trustees are confident that academic quality can be established for the new school without compromising the resource requirements of other university programs, Wake Forest officials said.

In a prepared statement, WFU President Thomas K. Hearn Jr. said: "The mission of the divinity school would be to train ministers."

"While the orientation and heritage of the divinity school would be Baptist, it would be open to students and faculty members of all faiths."

Start-up costs of the new divinity school were estimated to be \$600,000, with an annual operating budget of \$1 million.

— Removed restrictions based on geographic residence and church membership from trustee-election procedures. This amendment to trustee bylaws will be considered formally during trustees' Oct. 5 meeting.

— Reaffirmed their commitment to the university's Baptist heritage.

Mississippians nominated

NASHVILLE (BP) — Trustees to serve on the boards of the six Southern Baptist Convention-related seminaries have been nominated by the 1989 SBC Committee on Nominations.

In order to serve, the trustees must be elected by messengers to the 1989 annual meeting of the SBC, scheduled June 13-15 in the Las Vegas, Nev., Convention Center.

NEW ORLEANS SEMINARY (37 members): 8 nominations considered; 5 new members; 3

renominated. Nominated to a new term as a local member is J. Roy McComb, Columbia, Miss.

GOLDEN GATE SEMINARY (36 members): 8 nominations considered; 3 new members; 5 renominations. Bobby R. Arnold, a health care retirement center manager and member of First Church, Jackson, Miss., was nominated to fill the unexpired term — to expire in 1992 — of Thad Hawkins of Jackson, who resigned.

Centrist group speaks to issues, asks for votes for president

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE (BP) — Centrist Baptists touted a get-out-the-vote campaign and spelled out their positions on issues confronting the Southern Baptist Convention during a national symposium here May 2-3.

About 150 participants heard presentations from two denominational executives, a layman, and four pastors in the "Here We Stand" conference, sponsored by Baptists Committed to the Southern Baptist Convention, an organization of "centrist" Baptists formed in late 1988.

Topics concerned Scripture, the priesthood of the believer, local-church autonomy, separation of church and state, and the current state of the denomination.

Participants also heard presentations from the pastor expected to be their standard bearer in the 1989 annual meeting of the SBC, June 13-15 in Las Vegas, Nev. Daniel Vestal, 44, pastor of Dunwoody Church in suburban Atlanta, made a formal presen-

tation and held two question-and-answer sessions.

W. Winfred Moore, chairman of Baptists Committed and pastor of First Church, Amarillo, told participants to "Get your messengers together from your church and your area. As much as you and I dislike the idea, it is still a fact — and we didn't make it that fact — the only thing that really counts anymore is the number of votes in the house when the election (for president) is held."

The keynote address on "Here We Stand" was delivered by Nashville pastor Bill Sherman of Woodmont Church. The symposium, he said, was intended to "reinterpret what it has always meant to be all Baptist, what we believe and how we go about the sacred work of the church."

"We believe this reaffirmation is essential today, for the last 10 years has seen a disturbing erosion of many of the great biblical truths of our Bap-

tist heritage," he said.

Sherman noted that "10 years ago a movement was begun by some supposedly to save our denomination," and asked if Southern Baptists "are better off today . . . than we were in 1979?"

"Then," he said, "our mission gifts were climbing every year. Now, our Cooperative Program (the SBC's unified giving plan) budget is frozen, and gifts are on the decline."

Sherman repeated a litany of how "things were in 1979" and contrasted them with how they are now. His recitation included seminary enrollment, academic freedom in Baptist colleges, and the decline of special offerings for foreign and home missions. All, he said, are worse off now.

"Then, a climate of trust and acceptance was in vogue throughout state conventions and our national convention. Now, some state conventions are in throes of thwarting right-wing takeovers on an annual basis, while the national convention has been orchestrated in appointments and themes.

"Isn't it time to say enough is enough. Enough of political manipulation. Let Baptists once again love each other and accept each other.

Enough of hollow rhetoric and labelling without cause. Let Baptists once again do business on the basis of integrity."

Another pastor, W. David Sapp of First Baptist Church of Chamblee, an Atlanta suburb, discussed the priesthood of the believer and commented that a vote for Resolution 5 at the 1988 annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas, on pastoral authority and the priesthood of the believer was a vote against Matthew 20:25, which deals with servant leadership.

"Pastoral leadership is good and scriptural and right, but all of us are priests," he said.

James M. Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, told participants the long-held Baptist belief in separation of church and state is "crumbling," and detailed three "heresies" common today: revisionism, non-preferentialism, and reconstructionism.

Another denominational executive, Russell Dilday, president of Southwestern Seminary, noted the denomination is "divided . . . no longer a mighty army," but told participants, "This is no time to give up on the SBC; there is a glimmer of hope."

He said, however, that to have hope, the SBC must have "authentic Southern Baptist leadership," and said those who would lead the denomination need seven characteristics:

"They should have a profound and vital faith in Jesus Christ . . . must take the Bible seriously as the authoritative word of God . . . must know how to lead people to Jesus Christ . . . must have courage and a willingness to stand by their convictions . . . must be servants . . . must have paid the price for adequate and legitimate preparation . . . and must understand the importance of Baptist heritage."

In addition to the symposium, Baptists Committed leaders are organizing rallies across the country, to feature Vestal and other spokesmen, attempting to turn out messengers to the Las Vegas convention.

Dan Martin is BP news editor.

Annual associational officers' meet planned

The annual Associational Officers Interpretation Meeting is scheduled for May 16, at Alta Woods Church, Jackson. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. and dismiss at 3 p.m.

A special Bold New Growth-Mississippi presentation will be made.

Separate conferences will be provided for associational council members to equip them for interpreting suggested church programs to the church program leaders in their associations.

Don Wilson will lead directors of missions in exploring how the associational council plans, coordinates, conducts, and evaluates the ministry of the association.

Glen Williams, director of missions, Pike Association, will lead moderators in how to conduct meetings that improve fellowship among the churches of the association.

The Sunday School Conference will equip ASSIST directors to conduct Bold New Growth-Mississippi conferences in their local church council supper meetings. Church Training directors will preview the program emphases for 1989-90. Associational Church Music directors, both experienced and just beginning, will hear reports from area coordinators, share new ideas, and plan joint projects. Brotherhood directors will be equipped to evaluate suggested

church and association program activities and interpret these in the church Brotherhood. David Michel will lead the stewardship directors in a study of current stewardship development materials.

In the conference for evangelism directors and youth specialists Guy Henderson will be emphasizing the 1990 Here's Hope Simultaneous Revivals and the final preparation events, which will include media, rallies, prayer retreats, and general revival preparation.

J. Clark Hensley, director of family ministry, MBCB, and the associational family ministry directors will meet, as will Christian Action Committee chairpersons and Woman's Missionary Union directors.

Julius Thompson will lead the associational pastoral ministries directors to explore their role as they relate to the director of missions, associational council, and key leaders in the local church.

The conference for associational media library directors will be led by Barbara Freese of the Church Media Library Department, Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville.

For further information, contact the association office or Chester Vaughn, program director, MBCB, phone 968-3800.

Roe-connected case argued in Supreme Court

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP) — A highly publicized anti-abortion case was argued before the U.S. Supreme Court April 26, but no ruling is expected before late June.

Although experts expect the court to be narrowly divided over Webster v. Reproductive Health Services, the justices' questioning revealed little about how much of a Missouri anti-abortion law they might be willing to uphold or if they intend to overturn the court's 1973 landmark abortion decision, Roe v. Wade.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, considered the probable swing vote in the case, asked a few questions during the one-hour proceeding.

She did press former U.S. Solicitor General Charles Fried as to whether a fundamental right to decide whether or not to have a child exists.

Fried — a Harvard Law School professor who on behalf of the Bush administration asked the high court to overturn Roe v. Wade — said he was hesitant to formulate the right in such abstract terms or sweeping generalities as contained in Roe. O'Connor then asked, "Do you think that the state has the right to, in a future century we had a serious over-population problem, require women to have abortions after so many children?"

Replying that he did not, Fried said: "I think the important thing to realize is that when Roe was decided, it swept off the table regulations in the majority of American jurisdictions . . . and declared a principle, which said that it was unfair and unreasonable to regulate abortion in ways that most western countries still do regulate abortion."

"We are not here today suggesting that the court would, therefore, allow extreme and extravagant and blood-thirsty regulations and that it would lack the power to strike those down if they were presented to it . . . What is necessary is for the court to return to

legislatures an opportunity in some substantial way to express their preference, which the court says they may express, for normal childbirth over abortion, and Roe v. Wade stands as a significant barrier to that."

Acknowledging disagreement exists over when human life begins, Justice Antonin Scalia asked Frank Susman, who represented the St. Louis abortion clinic that challenged the Missouri statute, whether that disagreement leads to the conclusion that there "must be a fundamental right on the part of the woman to destroy this thing that we don't know what it is" or rather that it is a matter upon which people should vote after having made "up their minds the best they can?"

Susman said his conclusion is that when an issue is so divisive, emotional, personal and, intimate, it must be left as a fundamental right to the individual to make that choice under "her then-attendant circumstances, her religious beliefs, her moral beliefs, and in consultation with her physician."

Kathy Palen writes for the BP Washington bureau.

Blue Mountain provides care

Spring break for Blue Mountain College students and that of area schools did not coincide and presented a problem to commuter students with children in school.

The Baptist Student Union responded to the need by sponsoring childcare for students with school-age children the week of March 10-17. Students, the director, Tracy Simmons, and other volunteers led the children in various activities. Snacks and lunch were provided from the campus dining hall.

Centrist candidate offers power sharing if winner

By Marv Knox

NASHVILLE (BP) — If Southern Baptists elect Daniel Vestal as their president, his attitude will be winner-share-all rather than winner-take-all, he told a group of denominational "centrists."

Vestal is pastor of Dunwoody Church in suburban Atlanta and an announced candidate for the Southern Baptist Convention presidency. He will face SBC President Jerry Vines, pastor of First Church, Jacksonville, and eligible for another one-year term, when the SBC meets in Las Vegas, Nev., June 13-15.

Vestal spoke three times here to a symposium sponsored by Baptists Committed to the SBC May 1-2.

When Vestal announced his candidacy in mid-April, he said he would welcome Baptists Committed's support but insisted he does not belong to that or any other group. He does call himself a "centrist," a label adopted by most Baptist Committed members.

The first question put to him was about how he would conduct himself as president. "The pattern of the last 10 years has been basically a philosophy of winner-take-all," Vestal said. "My philosophy would be that the winner shares all."

Vestal also pledged, if elected, to seek a limitation on presidential powers. The 10-year SBC theological/political controversy has swirled around those powers, since the president initiates a chain of events that lead to the appointment of trustees for 24 entities related to the convention.

"Bold Mission Thrust (the SBC's plan to present the gospel to the whole world by the year 2000) was a focus on how we were going to fulfill the Great Commission. I will call us back to

some refocusing on how we will live out our lives in the last year of this millennium."

Vestal told the symposium audience "centrist" is a label that always has fit him: "I have tried to stand in the middle. I have always been identified as a conservative, a biblical inerrantist."

He said Southern Baptists have not been taking the Bible seriously.

"For 10 years, we've talked about the Bible, debated the Bible, but I fear we are not any more a people of the Bible than we were when we first started this theological, political wrangling. Indeed, we are less a people of the Bible than we were 10 years ago."

Speaking of the nature of Scripture, Vestal said: "The Bible is the book that tells us the truth about God. The truth that is true; not exhaustive; . . . truth without mixture of error. It is the truth that is always true to its intent and purpose."

The "critical" study of Scripture — which he defined as a serious attempt to look at the forms through which the Bible developed — can be very valuable in understanding that truth, Vestal said.

"Those critical methodologies, in the hands of Bible-believing Christians, are tools to help us understand the word of God, not tools to undermine the Scripture. They helped me value the Bible more."

The Bible has two major purposes, he said: "to tell us the truth about God so in knowing God through Jesus Christ we are saved from our sins" and "how to know God through the Lord Jesus Christ and in that knowledge live in this world as God intends."

Marv Knox is BP feature editor.

Baptists testify on child care proposals

LAND

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP) — A family tax credit should be the cornerstone of any child-care legislation, a Southern Baptist agency executive told a U.S. senate panel.

Richard D. Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, appeared before the Senate Finance Committee, which held two days of hearings on child-care welfare programs and tax credit proposals.

Basing his testimony upon a resolution on child care passed at the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in 1988, Land said three criteria should be used in evaluating any child-care proposal before Congress:

— Does it emphasize a tax-incentive approach to the problem?

— Does it emphasize state and local, rather than federal, regulation?

— Does it target benefits to people most in need of new assistance?

The proposals being considered by the Finance Committee — most of which feature some combination of individual tax credits and state block grants — are preferable to the Act for Better Child Care Services, Land said.

"They will be more efficient in delivering monetary relief and assistance to families," he testified. "They will not require an extensive network of regulation. They will not create a new level in the federal bureaucracy. And they help keep the focus of child care in the family."

Kathy Palen writes for the BP Washington bureau.

THOMAS

By Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP) — For constitutional purposes, the tax code provides a better mechanism for assisting parents whose children attend church child-care centers than federal subsidies, a Baptist attorney said in testimony presented to two congressional panels.

Any child-care program that provides grants and contracts to churches and other pervasively sectarian institutions is constitutionally suspect, said Oliver S. Thomas, Baptist Joint Committee general counsel, in written testimony to the Senate Finance and House Education and Labor committees.

He cited a 1988 Supreme Court decision that involved a federally funded program of education and social welfare services.

In *Bowen v. Kendrick*, Thomas said, the high court held institutions that are merely religiously affiliated — such as colleges, universities, community centers, and church charities — are eligible to participate on an equal basis with their non-sectarian counterparts. But pervasively sectarian institutions — such as churches, synagogues, and parochial schools — were held to be disqualified from participating, he added.

"The BJC questions the validity of any federal child-care program that provides grants and contracts to pervasively sectarian institutions," Thomas said. "In addition to containing potentially insurmountable constitutional problems, such an ap-

proach seems to be extraordinarily poor public policy.

"Congress, understandably, may wish to assist parents whose children, by choice or necessity, will attend church child-care centers; but government subsidies to those centers are not the answer. To the contrary, churches will be enticed into 'secularizing' their child-care programs and submitting to significant governmental regulation in order to serve the poor more effectively."

Citing a resolution on institutional child care approved by the 1988 Southern Baptist Convention, Thomas said a better approach would be to limit grants and contracts to non-sectarian institutions and then provide whatever assistance would go to families utilizing religious childcare providers through the tax code.

Child-care tax proposals — unlike child-care welfare programs — generally do not raise significant constitutional problems, Thomas explained.

Few people would question the legality of the dependent-care tax credit that is available to working parents who purchase any type of child care, he said, noting the legality of a tax benefit for all parents of young children — regardless of whether the parents purchase child-care services — would be even more secure.

Thomas addressed the constitutional problems of two major child-care proposals now before Congress.

Both proposals — the Act for Better Child Care Services and the Child Development and Education Act of 1989 — would authorize grants and contracts to child-care providers.

In order to meet constitutional requirements, Thomas said, both proposals must:

— Prohibit any religious discrimination in hiring child-care workers.

— Require a separate system of accounting for all funds received through government grants or contracts.

— Prohibit capital improvements to properties owned by pervasively sectarian institutions.

— Require a separate teaching staff be employed in any before-school or after-school program at a parochial school.

Kathy Palen writes for the Baptist Joint Committee.

State offerings drop in April

The first third of 1989 brought in \$6,064,394 in offerings from Mississippi churches through the Cooperative Program, according to Earl Kelly, executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

The gift total for the first four months of 1988 was \$6,317,025, or \$252,631 more than for 1989.

April gifts totaled \$1,252,219, the lowest April since 1984 when the total was \$1,145,917.

The 1989 budget for Southern Baptist causes in state and around the world is \$20,103,541. One third of that amount would be \$6,701,180. This means that the pro rata amount of giving is \$636,787 less than that projected by the Mississippi Baptist Convention when it ratified the budget last November.

Camp Garaywa

The summer camping program for GAs and Acteens begins with mini-week for GAs on May 31. Four weeks of GA camp are filled to capacity. These weeks include June 12-16, July 19-23, June 26-30, and July 10-14. Space is still available in all other weeks. July 24-28 is for Acteens. For more information contact the WMU office at 968-3800.

Ex. committee, board members nominated

NASHVILLE (BP) — Persons to serve on the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee and four boards — Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, Sunday School Board, and Annuity Board — have been nominated by the 1989 SBC Committee on Nominations.

In order to serve, the nominees must be elected by messengers to the 1989 annual meeting of the SBC, scheduled June 13-15, in Las Vegas, Nev.

The report, released to Baptist Press by Joe Reynolds, an attorney from Houston and chairman of the 1989 committee, includes an additional representative from Oklahoma on the Executive Committee and each of the four boards. Oklahoma topped 750,000 members during 1987-88, entitling the state convention to additional representation.

Nominated to a second term on the Executive Committee was James F. Yates, pastor of First Church, Yazoo City, Miss. The Committee on Nominations subcommittee will nominate a replacement for William W. Durr of Clinton, Miss., who is ineligible for nomination to the Home Mission Board. The term will end in 1993.

For the Sunday School Board, Zach T. Hederman Jr., a businessman and member of First Church, Jackson, Miss., has been nominated to replace Jerry S. Lee also of First Church, Jackson. W. Eugene Henderson, pastor of First Church, Brandon, Miss., has been nominated to a second term.

Covington Baptists support BJCPA

Messengers to the spring meeting of the Covington County Baptist Association voted a resolution in support of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and in opposition to the creation of the Religious Liberty Commission, according to Tim Turnham, pastor of Seminary Church, Seminary.

The resolution states that SBC votes have rejected calls to alter a commitment to the work and witness of the Baptist Joint Committee. The resolution says that Religious Liberty Commission would duplicate the role of the BJCPA and that "the formation and continuation of said commission would entail considerable expense, paid for by monies removed from the Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board, and other worthy Southern Baptist causes."

It also notes that the leaders of the FMB, HMB, Woman's Missionary Union, and Brotherhood Commission have publicly opposed the formation of the Religious Liberty Commission.

Marjorie Kelly to speak at Carey commencement

Marjorie Rowden Kelly will deliver the commencement address May 13 when some 185 graduate and under-



Kelly

graduate students will be awarded William Carey College diplomas.

She is the wife of Earl Kelly, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. She served on the Carey faculty, staff, and administration for 17 years before retiring as vice president for community relations.

A graduate of Agnes Scott College and New Orleans Seminary, Mrs. Kel-

ly taught at the seminary and served for six years as a Southern Baptist missionary to Israel. She wrote *The Gifted Woman I am*, and two children's books: *Three Davids* and *Flying Dragons*.

Graduation ceremonies are scheduled for 3 p.m. in Smith Auditorium of the Thomas Fine Arts Center. Graduates and their families will be honored with a reception in the home of President and Mrs. J. Ralph Noonkester, 8-9:30 p.m., May 12. They will be guests of the college's alumni association for a 10 a.m. brunch in Wilkes Dining Hall May 13.

A noon luncheon for graduates of Mississippi Woman's College will begin a year of celebration for this era in the life of Carey.

Baptists suffer losses in latest Lebanon strife

By Art Toalston

BEIRUT, Lebanon (BP) — Two people closely related to Lebanon's Baptist community died and windows at Beirut Baptist School were shattered during heavy artillery fire here in recent weeks.

An employee of Beirut Baptist School in predominantly Muslim West Beirut lost her sister soon after fighting erupted in mid-March, reported Jim Ragland, a 33-year Southern Baptist missionary to Lebanon who now lives in Cyprus. The employee's sister was killed by an artillery shell fragment.

In early April, a man who had worshipped regularly at Mousaitbeh Baptist Church in West Beirut was killed when an artillery shell ripped into his home in predominantly Christian East Beirut.

On April 16, an artillery shell hit the playground between Beirut Baptist School and Mousaitbeh Church. No one was injured, but windows throughout the compound were shattered. Ragland estimated the repair bill will reach \$10,000.

"It's about the fifth or sixth time this has happened," he said.

The fighting has kept the school closed for about a month, Ragland said.

The school that Ragland founded now has 988 students and about 50 teachers. A bomb shelter below the basement of the Baptist Center in East Beirut has housed more than 100 people for several weeks, Ragland added.

The two deaths are among more than 225 reported to date during the latest outbreak of violence between so-called Christian and Muslim forces.

Lebanon's civil war dates back to 1975 and has claimed more than 125,000 lives.

"Baptists and their friends are hurting," said Ragland, who along with other Southern Baptist missionaries was forced to leave Beirut when the U.S. government ended passport privileges for Americans in Lebanon in early 1987.

Ragland and his wife, Leola, were active in the Mousaitbeh congregation, and Ragland counted the dead man who attended that church and his wife as "very wonderful friends." Mousaitbeh is one of 16 Baptist churches in Lebanon.

Ragland reiterated his hope of returning to work in Lebanon someday. He reaches retirement age this

year but said has no plans for returning to the United States.

"We don't feel at all good about being in Cyprus while our friends in Lebanon are hurting," Ragland said. "We still feel that we're refugees here."

We miss our friends very keenly. Missionaries want to be with the people they've been called to minister to... in good times and bad times."

Ragland acknowledged "the world is kind of tired of Lebanon," but emphasized that Christians nevertheless have an ongoing responsibility "of prayer, love, sympathy, and concern" for the war-weary nation.

Art Toalston writes for the FMB.

REVIVAL

May 14-18

Hillcrest Baptist Church

3102 Monticello Drive
Jackson, MS



Jimmy Corbitt, pastor of Pine Forest Baptist Church, Macon Georgia, will be preaching.

Services

Sunday morning, 10:45

Sunday-Thursday, 7 p.m.

Monday-Wednesday, 12:00 noon

concluding promptly at 12:45

(meal served at 11:30)

Maurice Clayton is pastor.

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More blacks, ethnics, women are needed as chaplains, HMB says

ATLANTA (BP) — The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's chaplaincy division hopes to recruit more blacks, ethnics, and women as chaplains to meet increasing requests from organizations that employ chaplains.



400 attend Lad/Crusader Day

On Saturday, April 29 nearly 400 boys were present for the Lad/Crusader Day conducted at Central Hills Baptist Retreat. The boys had opportunities to be involved in sports events, campcraft competition, R.A. racers, and speaking events. Through the day they also had an opportunity to meet missionaries and be challenged by a gospel illusionist. The day concluded with awards being given to the best chapters. Four churches received awards. They were Fredonia, New Albany; Derma; Second, Greenwood; and First, Amory.

The division has begun a concerted effort to enlist more qualified Southern Baptists from minority

groups as chaplains, Huey Perry, HMB chaplaincy division director, said.

Southern Baptists do not appoint and employ chaplains in the same way as missionaries. Rather, the HMB chaplaincy division works through the Southern Baptist Chaplains Commission to endorse chaplains for employment by the military, hospitals, correctional institutions, businesses, and industry.

Currently, 93 percent of the 2,014 endorsed Southern Baptist chaplains are white males, Perry said. The total includes 106 women, 20 blacks, 18 Hispanics, and 19 ethnics.

The numbers do not reflect the diversity of the Southern Baptist Convention nor the American population, Perry noted.

Of Southern Baptists' 37,567 churches, about 3 percent are predominantly black, 6 percent are predominantly Hispanic and 2 percent are predominantly Asian. Southern Baptists worship in 88 languages every week.

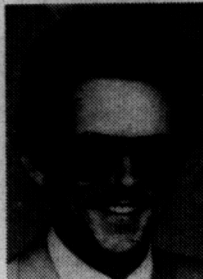
Organizations that employ chaplains, especially the military, are issuing pleas for more black, ethnic, and female chaplains, Perry said: "I recently received a request from the Navy to send them more women and minorities.

Devotional God found favor in Mary

By Bob Rogers

But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus." (Luke 1:30-31, NIV).

As Mother's Day approaches, we think of the great mothers of the Bible. Surely Mary the mother of Jesus was one of the greatest, for she was chosen to be the mother of the Messiah. The angel called her "favored." Why was Mary chosen?



Rogers

One reason why God chose Mary was that Mary chose a godly man. She was engaged to Joseph, a god-fearing man and descendant of King David. Too often young women rush into marriages with those who ask them first, rather than seeking out a Christian man who will help make a Christian home; yet there are many mothers today who are highly favored because they chose to marry godly men.

A second reason why God chose Mary was that Mary surrendered totally to God's will. In verse 38 she said, "I am the Lord's servant." Matthew 1:19 indicates that she probably endured scorn for being an unwed mother, but she accepted God's plan for her anyway. It is not easy for

mothers to faithfully obey God when the rest of the world seems to be going in the opposite direction; yet there are mothers today who are highly favored because they chose to surrender totally to God's will.

A third reason why God chose Mary was that Mary dedicated her child to God. Luke 2:21-22 says that they presented Jesus in the temple for circumcision. Luke 2:41-42 tells us that Jesus' parents faithfully attended the religious festivals, and took Jesus when he was old enough. Thus it is no surprise when we read in Luke 4:16 that it was Jesus' custom to worship every Sabbath in the synagogue. His parents had taught him to worship by their example. There are many mothers today who are highly favored because they chose to dedicate their children to God.

God found favor in Mary and chose her to be the mother of Jesus. Perhaps your own mother reminds you of Mary in her dedication and godliness. The greatest honor you could give her would be to accept her Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and get busy serving him in your church.

Bob Rogers is pastor, Calvary Church, Gloster.

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must be limited to 300 words and the editor reserves the right to trim those that are longer. Editorial prerogatives must be reserved under all circumstances, and the opinions of the letter writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff of the Baptist Record. Only signed letters will be used, but the writer may request that his name be withheld. The withholding of names will be at the discretion of the editor.

"Faith of a child"

I feel I must respond to a letter written by Mr. Bill H. Jobe Sr. His letter sounded confused to me. He states, "... I believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God," then turns around and says, "I do not believe each and every phrase or word in the Bible literally." One of his examples was when God was speaking to Adam and Eve in the garden. He questioned them, "Where are you?" and "What have you done?"

I too believe that God already knew the answers to these questions, as the Bible states that God is all-knowing; but he did not ask the question for his own benefit but for ours — to provoke a response from Adam.

It is for the same reason when you see green color marker on the wall paper and your child standing there with the crayon in her hand, and you ask, "Did you do that?" You are teaching them, hopefully, to choose an honest answer and to take responsibility for their actions.

When will we, as puny humans, stop trying to break apart God's inspired words and simply start applying their wonderful truths to our lives?

Only then can we become fruitful and start growing as we accept God as "I Am."

I believe also that God had his own reasons for allowing the Bible to be written as it was. After all, it is his inspired words. We must by faith accept that Jesus lived, died, and arose — all for us.

What could be so simple and yet so very difficult? I guess that's where the "faith of a little child" comes into it that Jesus speaks about.

Jeannie L. McDaniel
West

Reverence eroding

Editor:

It appears to me that reverence during our worship services is eroding. Maybe it's because of my advancing age that I feel this way. Special music used to set a reverent atmosphere for the preacher as he began his sermon. Sometimes a few amens would be sprinkled around at its completion. Nowadays it seems applause is in order, especially when the participant(s) have done a particularly fine rendition. It apparently hasn't stopped there. Recently, I visited a large, out-of-state, Southern Baptist church where the soloist did "quite a number." She got a standing ovation. What's next? Cheers and whistles?

I suppose it all started during the Billy Graham crusades where the audience would applaud at the end of musical numbers. Nevertheless, I have trouble with its acceptance during worship services. There will be many who will disagree with me. Even so, I still find it disrupting to the worship atmosphere.

While I'm about it, I wish there was a better way to greet visitors and make them feel welcome without disrupting the service. One pastor would have the visitors' cards collected during the offering and at the close of the service would recognize each one individually before the benediction. This was about as skillful a procedure as I have seen.

Again, I'll admit that it's probably old age creeping in; and I'm one of those fuddy-duddies now. Nevertheless, it saddens me to see some of the changes that are creeping into our worship services.

Duane Edge
Brandon

Had three "liberals"

Editor:

In March 26 Baptist Record you ask the question, "Who are the liberals?" In the Record of April 6, Mr. Bill H. Jobe Sr. said he was a liberal. I believe he is. Not because he believes that God knew where Adam was in Genesis when he asked Adam, "Where art thou?" Neither when God asked Cain where Abel was. Everyone knows that God already knew. Because God knows about a sparrow that falls to the ground.

Are there any liberals? The church I belong to has had three. This is why I say we have had three. We had one in the mid-50s that said lots of the scripture was added. I asked him to give us the scripture that was added, and I would say he was honest. He said it would cost him his job. He moved on.

Another on the return of Christ put the church at the white throne judgment. In so doing, he cut out the parable of the 10 virgins. All didn't go in Rev. 20:11-14. All will be there. I Thess. 4:13-18 saved people. II Cor. 5:10 saved people. I Cor. 15:35-50 saved people.

The third one used both above scriptures. Also he thinks the 10 stones in Jordan River and the 12 on the bank were to represent the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Scripture says it was to tell the children later when they asked why. They were to tell them how God brought them over.

I have been told the first one has gone back to the Bible. The second one has quit preaching. I gave the third one two books that should get him back to the Bible, one by Billy Graham, the other by E. J. Daniels. We have had three so there are lots of them out there.

Name withheld
by editor

Sin of racism

Editor:

One of your Letters to the Editor (April 27, 1989) asks the question: "If racism is such a great sin being ranked with drug use and pornography, why didn't Jesus Christ make at least one statement against it while he was here?" I thought this was an interesting way to ask the question since Jesus never said anything about drug use or pornography either. Be that as it may, I assume the letter writer is asking, "Is racism really all that bad — or is it sin? How do we know?"

For me the answer from God's word is an emphatic Yes. We know racism is sin the same way we know drug use and pornography are wrong, namely, by applying biblical principles to our contemporary lives. There is a biblical principle that destroying our bodies is wrong (thus, drug abuse is wrong/sin). There is a biblical principle that polluting our minds is wrong (thus, pornography is wrong/sin). Likewise, there is a biblical principle that not loving our neighbor is wrong/sin. And if one is prejudiced against his neighbor, he does not love him.

It is interesting that Jesus said much more about this matter of loving one's neighbor (and, by application, the sin of racism) than he did about destroying the body or polluting the mind. Does this mean that God considers racism a much viler sin than drug abuse or pornography? I must conclude he did — and does.

Paul comments on the creation of man and different races in Acts 17:26. "And He made from one every nation of men." In the Greek, the word "nation" is *ethnos*, which means ethnic group or race rather than a political unit. Paul is saying that all races descend from Adam.

The letter writer concludes: "And I

for one do not intend to try changing something that he [God] put into being." I wholeheartedly agree. Since God chose to make me a distant cousin of my black neighbor, I will love him as my neighbor and spare no efforts to rid my heart of the sin of racism.

John G. Armistead
Tupelo

Vision for Southwood

Editor:

We have a need and are asking Mississippi Baptists to pray if God would want to use them in helping us. It has been just over two years ago, when under the clear call of God, we left the thriving First Baptist Church of Muscle Shoals, Ala., to pastor a small congregation in Iuka. We felt as Phillip must have felt, leaving a great revival to go down to the desert to minister to one Ethiopian eunuch. We have found a small group of folks who are so eager to hear the Word and who so willingly follow our leadership. The only problem is that most of them are older folks on fixed incomes, and they are doing all they can financially do. We meet in a big metal building (still with a big debt) with most of the Sunday School rooms finished. However, the auditorium is just a big, bare, open space with a concrete floor. With the coming of NASA to this area, our heart's desire is to be ready for the new folks moving in.

Our land was purchased with Margaret Lackey fund money, and we met in a state-owned mobile chapel for awhile.

We especially ask that you remember us in your prayers. We have a great vision for Southwood Baptist Church.

James B. Brown, pastor
Southwood Baptist Church
P. O. Box 376
Iuka

Faces and places

by Anne Washburn McWilliams

I love you, Mama

"I love you, Mother," said little Nell." That was the first line of the poem I said on Mother's Day at County Line Church when I was ten. I don't remember the rest of it.

Last Sunday I celebrated Mother's Day with Mama at County Line for homecoming day. Yes, I know that next Sunday is Mother's Day but we celebrated a week early since I'm going to the Gulfshore dedication this weekend. Mama laughed about our celebrating early, and reminded me, "We've changed all the holidays this year to a different date, except Easter." We do that so more of us can all get together at the same time.

Mama is adaptable. A widow at 63, she had to learn to adapt to the many changes that came after Daddy's death, to coping with finances and new responsibilities and loneliness. She told me, "I had to grow up."

Mama is brave. In 18 years of living alone on her 60 acres, she has dealt with all kinds of breakdowns, from plumbing to cars; icestorms that cut off the electricity; a car veering into her yard in the middle of the night and crashing into a pine tree, killing the driver; a burglar breaking into her house one Sunday while she was at church; a fire that burned her smokehouse, the building that stored her treasure trove of antiques and nostalgic items, including her black satin wedding dress; the death of her only brother and of all her sisters but one. I have been the more amazed at her strength because I can remember few nights she ever spent alone, before Daddy's death. We all thought she would be afraid to stay there, but she says she must just depend on the Lord for his daily care.

Mama is thrifty. If I had used her know-how in stretching a meager income and had followed her financial advice all the years since I began work, I might even be a millionaire by now!

April Home Life printed a story about a mother and daughter who had written each other a letter every week for 27 years. Mama and I have written at least one letter a week, sometimes two, for 43 years, since I left home to enter college.

Daddy used to include a note. He'd say, "Your mother has told you all the news," and he would add some anecdote from his life, a few words of advice or wisdom, a Bible verse that had come to his attention that week, or a quote from some writer he'd read. Mama tells me about her flowers, places she has been during the week, what is going on at County Line, news about relatives, and what the doctor has said about her health. The many details help me to picture her in action, and narrow the 330 miles between Clinton, Mississippi and Lafayette, Alabama.

Only one letter a week, 52 weeks for 43 years, would total 2,236, or 4,472 for both of us. No wonder Mama and I both feel tired all the time.

I love you, Mama. Happy Mother's Day — again next Sunday.



A queen

... upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold . . . (Psalm 45:9)

To me she was a lady truly grand
With bits of fairy-dust upon her hand
And regal as a queen t'was ever made,
Her crown a single shiny silver braid.

Her royal touch gave comfort soft and warm,
And in her steps marched love-days as the norm;
With gift of self (encouragement her creed)
For every bird, or lamb, or child is need.

All mysteries of her kingdom she knew well,
Where berries grew and mushrooms she would tell
Where foxes hid and hungry fish might stay;
She honored with such pearls who passed her way.

She never guessed how far her realm would reach,
Nor numbered subjects that her words would teach;
She'd laugh the thought we deemed her "queen-design."
I've always known you were, grandmother mine.

—Erma Jewel Crowe

(This poem is about Myrtle French Province, who lived all her 92 years in the Ozarks.)

Mama was a weaver

Mama was always weaving
With threads of silver and gold.
Her tapestry stretched across the miles
The width and length untold.

Her weaving was done in the mornings,
In the evenings or late at night;
No matter the weather to Mama,
Or whether it was dark or light.

She wove when the need came for family
Or her neighbor across the way,
Her feet made the beautiful patterns;
Her hands made the stitches each day.

Some stitches may have crossed each other
As she wove many miles to and fro,
Weaving each stitch so carefully
While always on the go.

In every stitch was concern and love;
It was all for her fellowman,
And each was made with silver and gold
With the touch of her tender hand.

—Velma A. Windham
Taylorsville

Life

There's always a flower blooming,
cosmic glory assuming.
Camellia yields to azalea,
English dogwood trailing her.
There's beauty all around the year.

So is a virtuous woman in her generation,
serving God beyond temptation.
She gathers manna with the sprinkling rain,
feeds the hungry and soothes their pain.
She is nurtured in prayer and salvation
from early youth 'til time holds sway.

Then blooms another, I saw her today,
running in blue jeans to cut a bouquet.
Laughing wet in sudden storm
she saved the red roses from harm,
and she gave them to her mother.

—Violet Tackett, McComb



My dearest mother

Today I washed my clothes
in a washing machine.
I thought of you, and my
childhood years.
As you rubbed on a washboard
until each piece was clean
Then rinsed them in bluing water;
To my eyes this almost brought tears.

Today as I put my clothes
in the dryer to dry.
I thought how you hung
yours on a line,
That is, if the weather was so
you could, you'd try —
Then the rains would start
and you'd hang them by the fire.

Today I cooked on my gas
stove, so modern and fast
and I thought of you and your
wooden stove, so slow.
It made me love you more
and wonder at your patience in the
past.
Your patience never ran low,
no matter how long the problems
would last.

Today I washed my dishes
in a nice sink,
And mother I thought of you, so long
ago.
You had no running water;
Our water came from a well
so deep, you know —
But you never complained, or got
upset when our water bucket was run-
ning low.

Today I had some coke to
drink and watched TV.
I thought of you and how you
had no icebox for ice to freeze.
Today, things are different,
as you well know, for you and me.
I'm so glad and proud for
you — it's hard to believe.

Today, I want to thank you
for all you've done
To make my life a better one.
Even though I'm always on the run,
Thank you for the love you
gave, as busy as you had to be.
Thank you for being a Christian
example to me.

—Ruby Merchant

From Mom to my children

My dears, I need your friendship now,
Even tho' I'm well clothed, housed, and fed.
I need your strength and courage
For that lonely road ahead.

I am old, halt, and oh so weary
Yet I have that last mile to go.
You could help make that mile more cheery,
Fill my old heart with a sunset glow.

Then when I am way out yonder
When from earthly eyes I'm hid
Instead of saying "Oh! how I wish I had,"
How comforting to say "I'm so glad I did."

Someday when you reach the turnpike
That leads to your last mile
You can remember the love you gave me
And start down your road with a smile.

I'll be waiting over there to greet you
With a shout of joy and a big, big smile,
Remembering the love you gave me
As I walked my last, long mile.

—Iva Belle Pittman
Pascagoula



Students work in Ohio during spring break



Those making the spring break trip to Ohio were (pictured from left to right): BSU president, Scott Smith of Heidelberg; religious activities director, Frank Bowers of Hattiesburg; Tony Bernard, Denham Springs, La.; Lisa Bo of Juneau, Alaska, and the Carey-on-the-Coast campus; Amy Matthews, Columbus; Rusty Thomaston, Gautier; Bill Sewell, Pensacola; Brenda Wolfe, Pensacola; Tina Williams, Pascagoula; Linda Wolfe, Pensacola; Stacy O'Quin, Tylertown; Donna Wolfe, Pensacola; Rhonda Hensarling, Hattiesburg; Sheri Allen, Franklinton, La.; Kim Graham, Picayune; Lisa Robicheaux, Luling, La.; and Susan Lofton, Gautier.

AKRON, OHIO — Sixteen William Carey College students and their Baptist Student Union advisor spent their spring break here working in area churches. The group divided into three teams to work in this southern Ohio area.

Team One worked with Cornerstone Baptist Church, a newly founded mission church. Through telephone calling, card writing, and personal visits, these students gathered forty prospects to help strengthen the mission.

Team Two worked with the Celebra-

tion Baptist Chapel, a mission church scheduled to begin services on Easter Sunday. The Carey BSU members made contacts to gather prospects for the opening service.

Team Three spent the week painting the interior of Trinity Baptist Church in nearby Twinsburg.

The spring break mission trip was training for three of the members. Brenda Wolfe, Linda Wolfe, and Tina Williams will serve as Mississippi BSU summer missionaries across the United States this year.

Staff changes

Donald Glen Payne resigned from Sylvarena Church, Wesson, April 30, to accept Forest Lake Church of



Payne

Tuscaloosa, Ala., effective May 7. Payne was pastor of Sylvarena Church for five years; during this time the church witnessed a 19.23 percent increase in Sunday School enrollment and a 6.15 percent increase in church membership. He will graduate May 20

from New Orleans Seminary with a doctor of ministry degree.

Dewey Roach is interim pastor of New Salem Church, Lowndes County.

George Smith is the new pastor at Ecru Church.

Steve Griffin has accepted the pastorate of Mt. Vernon, Mississippi Association. He plans to study at New Orleans Seminary this fall. He will graduate from Mississippi State this summer.

Lee Castle has resigned as pastor of Slayden Church to assume the pastorate of First Church, Macon. He went to Slayden eight years ago from Yockanookany Church in Louisville.

Senior Adult Corner



Members of the Triple L Club of First Church, Kosciusko, recently visited New Orleans Seminary. The group toured the campus, the city, and were led in a Bible study by Jimmy Dukes, professor. A tour of the Sellers Home was also conducted.

The group also traveled to Gulfport where George Abrams shared with them the ministry of the International Seaman's Home.

The group then went to Bellingrath Gardens and Home before returning to Kosciusko.

Pictured are Mrs. Grady Robertson, Mrs. Gwin Middleton, Mrs. Gladys Mooney, Mrs. Carlana Hardin, Mrs. Mildred Tindoll, Mrs. Preston Dew, Gwin Middleton, Mrs. Verna Rodgers, Miss Flora Green, Mrs. Ellen Scarborough, Preston Dew, Mrs. David Hulsey, John Sproles, Mrs. John Sproles, Mrs. Paul Green, Grady Robertson, Frank Simpson, David Hulsey, and Paul Green.

Churches adopt Expanded Annuity plan

The following churches have adopted the Expanded Annuity plan since those reported in the April 20 issue of the Baptist Record: Benton/Tippah: Oakland; Franklin: New Salem; George: Rocky Creek; Gulf Coast: Popp's Ferry; Jackson: Belle Fountain; Lamar: Corinth; Lawrence: Hepzibah; Lee: East Mt. Zion; Marion: White Bluff; Newton: Beulah and Midway; Oktibbeha: Self Creek; Tallahatchie: Mount Pisgah; Tishomingo: Southwood; Yazoo: Black Jack.

MasterLife teleconference scheduled

A MasterLife Growth Teleconference is scheduled to be broadcast on the Baptist Telecommunications Network, May 21, 3-5 p.m. with interaction via telephone hookup in seven Mississippi locations.

Avery Willis, author of MasterLife, and Jimmy Crowe, field services coordinator for MasterLife workshops, will answer questions from participants in the various locations.

Live reports from missionaries from foreign mission fields will also be a part of the live teleconference.

Mississippi sites and hosts are First Church, Tutwiler, Aubrey Martin; Lauderdale Association office, Wayne Marshall; Pike Association office, Kenneth Walters; First Church, Kosciusko, David Hulsey; Thirty-Eighth Ave. Church, Hattiesburg, Jimmy McFatter; First Church, Byhalia, Kenneth McMillen; and First Church, Magee, Greg Stanford.

More than 150,000 persons in the U.S. have participated in a MasterLife discipleship course. The testimonies of some of these will be included in the teleconference.

Group goes Second Mile to lend aid

The Second Mile ministry is a group of lay people who seek to give material and spiritual aid to needy persons in their area. They meet weekly at First Church, Biloxi.

Frank Gunn, pastor, First, Biloxi, said the group has a rule that they will give no material help — clothing, food, jobs, or other — without first presenting a gospel witness to the individual or family seeking help.

The group has its own bank account, for use in helping materially. They keep a record of aid given and to whom, so that all the aid won't continually go to the same persons, rather than being shared by as many as possible.

Gunn had gotten a letter from an elderly black woman, expressing gratitude for help she had received from the group and saying, "These people are truly no respecters of persons . . ."

Most misfortunes are easier to bear than the fear of those that haven't happened — and probably never will.

Revival results

Good Hope (Leake): April 16-21; youth revival led by Greg Latham; ten saved and 33 rededication and other commitments; Odell Tebo, pastor.

Harrisburg, Tupelo: April 16-20; Henry Linginfelter, evangelist; Dick Barrett, music evangelist; professions of faith, 37; professions of faith/baptism, 45; other decisions, 116; James R. Chatham II, pastor.

Southwestern plans luncheon in Las Vegas

FORT WORTH, Texas — Tickets to the National Alumni Luncheon of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary are available and may be purchased by mail until June 2.

Southwestern's luncheon will be held immediately following the Wednesday morning session June 14 of the Southern Baptist Convention in Las Vegas, Nev.

The luncheon is at the Las Vegas Hilton. Tickets are \$17.50 per person by mail, or \$20 if purchased at the convention.

The seminary will recognize six Distinguished Alumni at the luncheon. Those to be honored are Nilson Fanini, William Souther, Ben Elrod, John Seelig, William Hendricks and Finlay Graham.

Tickets for the luncheon may be ordered by writing to John Seelig, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, P. O. Box 22000-3E, Fort Worth, Texas, 76122, or by calling (817) 923-1921, ext. 2350.

MasterLife workshop at N.O.

NEW ORLEANS — Both a "MasterLife" and a "MasterBuilder" (an extension of MasterLife) workshop will be held at New Orleans Seminary, May 22-26.

Cost (including materials) is \$82.50 for MasterLife; and \$50 for MasterBuilder. For more information, contact the Office of Continuing Education, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, La., 70126, or call (504) 282-4455.

Revival dates

Crestview, Petal: May 7-12; Sunday services, 11 a.m.; evening services, 7; Mon.-Fri., 10:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.; Sam Jones, full-time evangelist of Destrahan, La., evangelist; Brad Griffin, music and youth director, Crestview, music.

Briar Hill, Florence: May 14-18; Sunday, 11 a.m., followed by noon meal, and 7:15 p.m.; Mon.-Thurs., 10:30 a.m. and 7:15 p.m.; Ed Gandy, First, Kosciusko, evangelist; Gene Hubbard, music; Wilson Winstead, pastor.

Emmanuel, Pearl: May 14-19; Sunday 7 p.m., weekdays, 7:30 p.m.; Danny Moss, pastor, Macedonia, preacher; Richard Lister, First, Madison, music evangelist; Tommy Anderson, pastor.

Homecomings

Black Hawk (Carroll): May 21; worship service, 11 a.m.; Eli Wiltshire, message; dinner in fellowship hall; singing in the afternoon; Bill Blount, pastor.

Pastor's wife dies

Mrs. Jeannette Roberts Floyd died of cancer in Memphis at Baptist Memorial Hospital on April 24, 1989. Funeral services were held April 27 at her home church, Zion Hill Baptist in Union County. She leaves her husband, Billy Floyd, pastor of Skene Baptist Church, and children; Billy G. Floyd, Jr. and Tim Floyd of Calhoun City, and Beverly Floyd.

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Just for the Record



Ebenezer Church, Bassfield, held its second RA-GA recognition service, April 23. GAs receiving Mission Adventure badges were Kimberly Cramer, Debra Jones, Brandi Hatton, Kristi Hatton, Ashley Broome, and Terri Lynn Lee. RAs receiving awards were Alex Broome, Bobby McNease, Bryan Dixon, Merrell Porter, and Todd McNease. Charles Cook is pastor, Beth Broome is GA leader, and Donna Porter is RA leader.



Macedonia Church, Brookhaven, on March 19 had a ground breaking service after the morning worship hour. The purpose was to begin refurbishing the sanctuary, light and improve the softball field, resurface the parking lots, enclose the church buildings into one structure, and construct a Family Life Center. Much of the work will be done by the men of the church. The estimated cost of \$250,000 will be paid off in a three year period using the "Together We Build" program.

William Carey College's Baptist Student Union (BSU) has elected its 1989-1990 executive council. They include: president, Cindy Rachel, Gretna, La.; vice president, Rusty Thomaston, Gautier; missions chairman, Darren Miley, Crystal Springs; noonday/TNT chairman, Scott DeMoss, Sugarland, Tex.; churchmanship chairperson, Janie Vandiver, Tupelo; communications, Donna Wolfe, Pensacola, Fla.; community missions, Tim Moran, Pensacola; discipleship, Tina Williams, Pascagoula; fellowship, Amy Matthews, Columbus; Newsletter Editor, Donna Lewallen, Gautier; and BYW president: Charlotte DeLoach, Bay Springs.

Oak Grove Church, Winston County, will have memorial services, May 14 at 11 a.m. W. A. McPheeter, pastor, will bring the message on "The Influence of Mothers." Ivan Reynolds and Jeremy Thomas will lead the music. Dinner will be served at the church.

Goodwater Church, Lauderdale County, celebrated its 125th anniversary at homecoming on May 7. James Spencer brought the message and Philip Duke led the music. Clay Cooley is pastor.

The William Carey College Department of Education hosted the spring meeting of the Private Colleges of Education in Mississippi organization recently. Beth Richmond of the Carey education faculty currently serves as president.

Mississippi Baptist activities

- May 14 Mother's Day
- May 14 Christian Home Emphases (from Mother's Day-Father's Day)
- June 18 (Fam. Min.-CT Emphasis)
- May 16 Associational Officers Interpretation Meeting; Alta Woods BC, Jackson; 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. (PD)
- May 19-20 Adult Campcraft Training; Central Hills Retreat; 6 p.m., 19th-22 p.m., 20th (BRO)
- May 19-20 Special Ministries Retreat; Camp Garaywa; 3 p.m., 19th-3 p.m., 20th (SS)
- May 20 Day Camp Leader Training; Central Hills; 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. (CT)
- Acteens Special-North; FBC, Oxford; 10 a.m.-3 p.m. (WMU)

MWC alumna to begin year of celebration

Mississippi Woman's College alumna from as far away as Texas and California have made reservations to return to their alma mater (now William Carey College) for a May 13 luncheon that will begin a year of celebration of the Woman's College era.

The 50th anniversary reunion of the Class of 1940, scheduled for next spring, will mark the end of the first important Baptist-related period in the history of the private liberal arts college. The school almost survived the rigors of the Great Depression, but enrolled eventually declined to the point where the school was forced to close its doors after the 1940 school term.

MWC alumni who did not receive notice of the luncheon are invited to make their reservation through the President's Office, William Carey College, Hattiesburg, MS 39401 or by calling (601-582-6223).

Carey to offer class in preaching

William Carey College will offer a class in "Christian Preaching" as part of its May 15-June 1 mini-term. Steve Odom, a Ph.D. graduate in Christian preaching, from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., will teach the one-hour course. He is pastor of University Church, Hattiesburg.

The one-hour class will meet on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, beginning May 16. Those taking the one-hour course for college credit will pay the regular fee of \$115. Persons interested in taking the class without earning college credit may audit the class for a fee of \$50.

Registration will be held at the first meeting of the class on May 16. Call (601) 582-6103 for additional information.

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Applications are being accepted for a full-time Program Director in a Jackson area church. Salary will be negotiated, in keeping with training and experience. Send resume to: Program Director, Box 636, Ridgeland, MS 39158.

Thursday, May 11, 1989

BAPTIST RECORD PAGE 9

Carey plans mini-term

HATTIESBURG — William Carey College will offer a between-sessions mini-term on both its Hattiesburg and Coast campuses. Classes start on May 15 and run through June 2.

The intensive three-week courses will offer college students an opportunity to earn extra credit without tying up their entire summer.

Offerings on the Hattiesburg campus will include art appreciation, microcomputer application, the contemporary world, comparative psychology, and a special course in Christian preaching. The later course will be offered for credit or at a

special low price for those wishing to take the course without enrolling for credit.

The coast campus, in Gulfport, will include courses in human wellness, stress management, technical writing, and beginning swimming.

Regular ten-week summer terms will start June 5 on all three Carey campuses — Hattiesburg, Gulfport, and New Orleans.

Visit any of the campuses for full details or call: Hattiesburg — 601-582-6103; Gulfport — 601-865-1500; New Orleans — 504-897-5906.

'Born again' Ugandan president promises end to violence

KAMPALA, Uganda (EP) — Yoweri K. Museveni, the leader of Uganda, says he is a born-again Christian, and promises to make every attempt to stop the violence and bloodshed in his African nation. The promise and testimony of faith came during an interview with Dan Wooding, an international Christian journalist.

"The violence will be stopped with justice — by punishing those who commit violence wrongfully," said Museveni, who said he has no doubt that Uganda will again become "the

Pearl of Africa."

Museveni explained that although now he only occasionally attends church, he was once "actually a fanatic." He told of a commitment he made to Christ at an early age and said he used to preach at Scripture Union meetings in his home town of Mbarara. "My faith is strong," he said. "But I separate culture from faith."

Museveni said there is now total freedom to practice faith in Uganda.



APRIL 1989

CT	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
5:30	The Joy of Music/One in the Spirit	Sergeant Preston of the Yukon	Adventures of the Lone Ranger	Great Churches of America (I)	Caraculand	Great Churches of America (II)	The Bible and Life
6:30	This is the Life	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Devery and Goldstein
7:30	Profiles	30 Wall Street	Christian Lifestyle	Word of Life	Campus Review	Insight	Sunshine Factory
8:30	Changed Lives	Sunshine Factory	Magazine	Sunshine Factory	Sunshine Factory	Sunshine Factory	Sunshine Factory
9:30	ACTS Methodist Hour	Skipper, the Bush Kangaroo	Skipper, the Bush Kangaroo	Skipper, the Bush Kangaroo	Skipper, the Bush Kangaroo	Skipper, the Bush Kangaroo	Lone Ranger
10:30	Come Alive	One in the Spirit	Catch the Spirit	Judy's Kitchen	30 Good Minutes	ACTS Presbyterian Hour	Clisco Kid
11:30	Catch the Spirit	The Clisco Kid	What's Happening	What's Happening	What's Happening	What's Happening	Popcorn Theatre
12:30	Day of Discovery	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre
1:30	ACTS Presbyterian Hour	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Hollywood Review	Jimmy Houston
2:30	The Baptist Hour	30 Wall Street	U.C. Video News	Word of Life	Campus Review	Encore Theatre	The Super Hardman
3:30	Sunday Selection	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	The Bible and Life
4:30	Missions 99	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	Devery and Goldstein
5:30	Love Worth Finding	Psychiatry and You	Psychiatry and You	Psychiatry and You	Psychiatry and You	Psychiatry and You	Sunshine Factory
6:30	Day of Discovery	Skipper, the Bush Kangaroo	Skipper, the Bush Kangaroo	Skipper, the Bush Kangaroo	Skipper, the Bush Kangaroo	Skipper, the Bush Kangaroo	Lone Ranger
7:30	First United Methodist Church, Houston	Adventures of the Lone Ranger	Great Churches of America (I)	Caraculand	Great Churches of America (II)	Sergeant Preston of the Yukon	Popcorn Theatre
8:30	ACTS Methodist Hour	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Country Crossroads
9:30	Zola Levitt	Search	Word of Life	Campus Review	Created to Be One	Christian Lifestyle Magazine	Sing Out America
10:30	The Baptist Hour	The Joy of Music/One in the Spirit	Catch the Spirit	Profiles	Invitation to Life	30 Wall Street	The Bible and Life
11:30	Richard Jackson	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	Prayer Song
12:30	Day of Discovery	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	The Baptist Hour	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre
1:30	This is the Life	Adventures of the Lone Ranger	Great Churches of America (I)	This is the Life	Caraculand	Great Churches of America (II)	Lightmusic
2:30	Sunday Selection	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today
3:30	Missions 99	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE
4:30	ACTS Methodist Hour	Search	Word of Life	Campus Review	Created to Be One	Christian Lifestyle Magazine	Sing Out America
5:30	Prayer Song	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE
6:30	Sunday Selection	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre
7:30
8:30
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President Vines makes appointments

By Dan Martin

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP) — Southern Baptist Convention President Jerry Vines has announced his appointments to four key committees to serve during the 1989 annual meeting of the SBC, scheduled June 13-15 in the Las Vegas, (Nev.) Convention Center.

The SBC Constitution requires the convention president to appoint the Committee on Committees and the Resolutions Committee "in conference with" the two vice presidents and the Credentials Committee "in consultation with" the vice president. The president appoints the Tellers Committee "in consultation with" the SBC registration secretary.

"My assignment to appoint members... has been a challenging one," Vines told Baptist Press, the denominational news service which, under the bylaws, is required to release the appointments at least 45 days in advance of the annual meeting.

"I have approached my assignment energetically, prayerfully and carefully. My appointments have been made on the basis of recommendations received from state executive secretaries, pastors, directors of missions, church staff members and members of local churches," he said.

"These appointments reflect my commitment to appoint the best Southern Baptists I could find. They are Bible-believing people who love the Lord, believe the Bible and are committed to the Southern Baptist Convention."

Vines said he consulted with the two vice presidents "in meetings and by means of telephone. We have gone over these appointments together. I am pleased that Darrell Robinson, first vice president, and Rudy Hernandez, second vice president, issue these appointments jointly with me."

Robinson, former pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., currently is evangelism vice president for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Hernandez is pastor of Metro Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas.

Vines said the 113 people he appointed "include people from all walks of life. They are from the ranks of homemakers, pastors' wives, retired people, college professors, business people and professional people. They are people from a wide variety of positions in denominational life... pastors, associate pastors, church administrators, church Woman's Missionary Union presidents, church Sunday School directors, state executive secretaries, presidents and vice presidents of state conventions, members of state executive committees, president of state pastors' conferences, state WMU directors, directors of missions, moderators of associations, seminary presidents and professors, former missionaries, former Southern Baptist Convention presidents and former Peace Committee members."

He also noted they come from "good Southern Baptist churches. The average of all Cooperative Program (unified budget) percentages from their churches is 11 percent. They come from churches ranging in size from under 50 members to more than 18,000 members."

"The overwhelming majority of these appointees have never served on any committee in the Southern Baptist Convention," Vines said, but add-

ed that "where exceptions occur, there are valid reasons."

"For example, I felt it would be wise to appoint last year's chairmen of the resolutions, tellers and credentials committees to serve on the same committees this year for purposes of transition and to serve as a resource person."

He commented Lee Porter, registration secretary, "made several excellent suggestions relative to the tellers and credentials committee. In implementing these suggestions, several people were placed on these committees who have served in the past."

Vines concluded: "I believe these observations give clear evidence that I have fulfilled my commitment to appoint the best Southern Baptists I could find. I am confident these Bible-believing Southern Baptists will carry out their assignments with the desire that God's will be done in our SBC and without any personal hostility."

Committee On Committees

The committee, which has 66 members — two from each of the 33 state or regional conventions qualified for representation in the SBC — will be chaired by Sam Medina, a Hispanic attorney from Lubbock, Texas. Medina is a member of Alliance church.

SBC Bylaw 21 says the Committee on Committees "shall nominate all special committees authorized during sessions of the convention not otherwise provided for." However, the committee's key responsibility is nominating members of the Committee on Nominations, which, in turn, nominates trustees to serve on the 24 national entities affiliated with the SBC.

From each state, Vines appointed a layperson and a person with clergy or denominationally-related employment. He did not provide occupations for the laypersons nor specific titles for the clergy or denominationally-related employees.

In the listing, the clergy will be listed first.

MISSISSIPPI — Gus Merritt, Clark Venable Memorial church, Decatur; J.D. Cutrer, First church, Pascagoula.

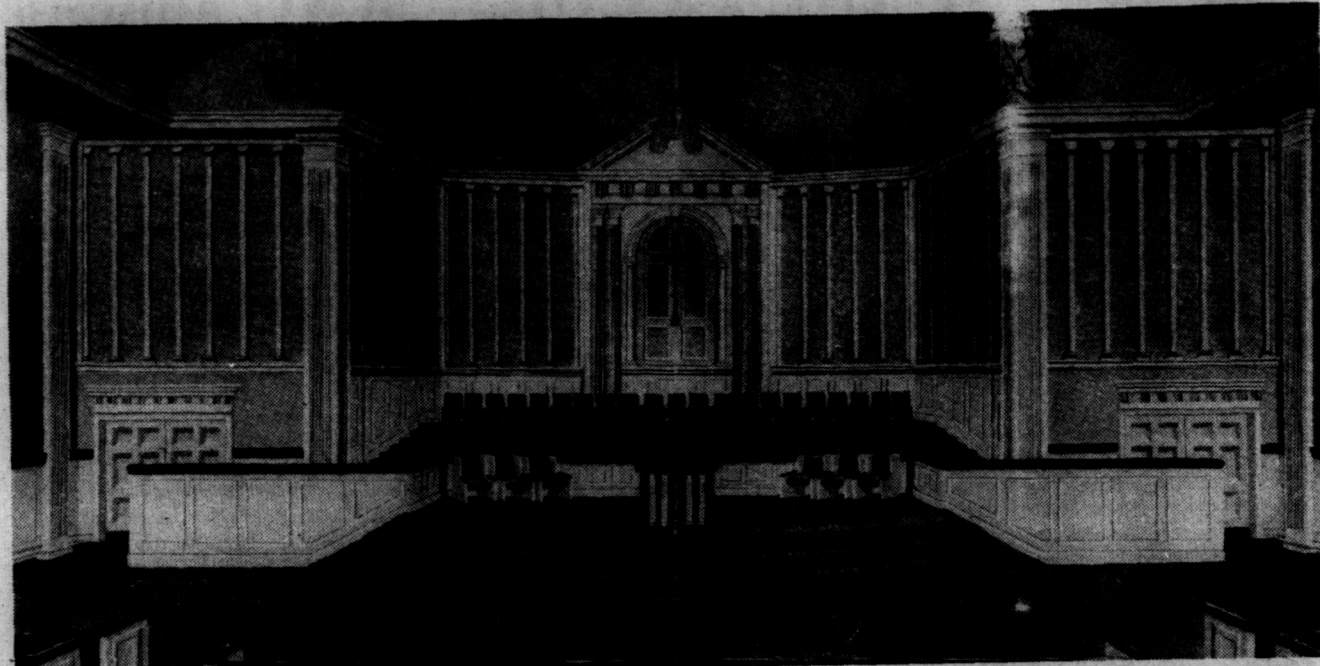
Martin writes for BP.

City drops ban on beach preaching

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, Tex. (EP) — Town officials here dropped their threats to apply anti-solicitation laws to beach evangelists after people involved with that ministry took their case to federal court.

The city had said that preaching on the beach would be treated as soliciting, and would need to meet city conditions, such as application in advance, payment of a permit fee, and acquisition of liability insurance. City Attorney Paul Cunningham said evangelistic activities would require a permit.

U.S. District Judge Filemon Vela of Brownsville, Texas, said at a hearing that the beaches of South Padre Island are a recognized public forum for free speech activities. In response, officials of the town agreed that "preaching and passing out religious literature were not violative of the town's ordinances."



Morrison Heights dedicates renovated worship center

Morrison Heights Church, Clinton, dedicated its worship center renovation on "I Love My Church Day" there April 30. Ken Alford, pastor, preached on "I Love My Church," with Matthew 16:13-19 as his text. Goals had been set for 1,000 in Sunday School and 100 "friends" visiting. One thousand and eighty-seven came to Sunday School; 76 visitors were present.

Renovation of the worship center included new carpet, paint, expansion of the choir loft, enlarging the platform area, upholstering and refinishing pews, a lighting package, shutters, and a new sound system.

In the dedication service, John Russell, associate pastor,

read II Chronicles 24:4, 5, 8-13. Bill Campbell gave an overview of renovation accomplishments. Pastor and congregation read responsively I Chronicles 29:2-16. The pastor; associate pastor; music minister, Mike Parks; minister of students, Hal Kitchings; and minister of education, Richard Collum led in the litany of dedication. Alisha Brashear, Stephanie Buell, and Karen Hardy sang "Love of All," accompanied by Dalma Moore and Shelia Richardson on the flutes.

Morrison Heights is launching an intercessory prayer ministry. This was dedicated in the Sunday evening service.

Outstanding small-church pastors named



Summerlin

Douglas

Outstanding small-church pastors in Mississippi have been named for 1989 in a program coordinated by the Church Administration/Pastoral Ministries Department of the MBCB and the Sunday School Board.

The two are LaVerne Summerlin and Gene Douglas. Summerlin is pastor of Cooperville Church at Morton and Douglas was pastor of Palestine Church until March when he became pastor of Union Church, Seminary.

The award is given to pastors who have given "... noteworthy and meritorious achievement in pastoral ministries and/or denominational service..." A small church is defined as having a minimum membership of 300.

A Meridian native, Summerlin is a graduate of Clarke College, Blue Mountain College, and earned the master of divinity degree from New Orleans Seminary. He was pastor at New Zion, 1981 to 1985 when he went to Cooperville.

Douglas was born in New Hebron and earned an associate degree in divinity at New Orleans Seminary. He plans to enter William Carey College this fall to work on his bachelor's degree.

Have you noticed that some folks get into deep water trying to make a big splash?

Few people want more than their share, but many have an exaggerated idea of what their fair share is.

One moment of patience may ward off a great disaster; one moment of impatience may ruin a whole life.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON COMMENTARIES

God strengthens relationships

By Greg Martin

Joshua 22:10, 16, 27-29, 34

In the 22nd chapter of Joshua, the children of God came within an inch of civil war. Such a conflict would have meant defeat for all Israel. Such a war could have been exactly what the enemies of the Lord desired. The Canaanites, Amorites, and other inhabitants of the land were not able to withstand the conquering Israelites. If the Israelites would fight among themselves, then perhaps the inhabitants could repossess their land. This surely was the reasoning of the pagans in that day.



Martin

The problem in Israel arose over an altar that the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh built at Geliloth just before they crossed the Jordan River to return to the east bank. The altar was of great size. It was built by the Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh to be a reminder of the faith they held in common with

LIFE AND WORK

the other Israelites who possessed the west bank. Their purpose and intent was designed to strengthen their relationship with the other believers. The opposite effect was the result.

The remaining Israelite tribes mistakenly interpreted the altar by the Jordan as an act of apostasy (verse 16). The Mosaic law forbade pagan worship in the land. (Deuteronomy 13:13-15). The remaining tribes of Israel presumed that the altar was built for unholy worship. So a delegation from the nine and a half tribes assembled to discuss the problem at Shiloh. From there they traveled to meet with the two and a half tribes by the river Jordan. War was imminent (verse 12).

The tribes of the east bank explained that their construction of the altar was not for pagan worship or even worship of the one true God (verses 27-29). They intended to keep on worshipping with the rest of Israel in the appointed place as the law said in Deuteronomy 12:5-14. They explained the altar was a replica. It was to be a witness between the tribes. The altar at

Geliloth was to be a reminder to the future generation that God was Lord of those on the east bank, as well as the west.

After the explanation, the threat of war subsided. The 12 tribes came to an understanding that was within God's law.

From this story of near tragedy that turned into triumph we can learn several principles to strengthen our relationships with other believers. First, for there to be a strengthened fellowship there must be a common faith. The two and a half tribes did not forsake the Lord. They were committed to always following the same God as the rest of Israel.

The common faith for God's people today centers around the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God who became man. As a sinless man, he died on a cruel cross for sinful men. He arose from the dead to give hope and victory to all who trust him. Those of us who share the same beliefs about who Jesus is can have a strengthened fellowship.

Second, there needs to be dialogue and understanding when actions are perceived to be outside of God's will. Can you imagine if the tribes of the west bank came to slaughter their

brothers without an inquiry? A husband and wife would do well to heed this principle. Squabbling churches could learn from this story. Our dear Southern Baptist Convention would be wise in these days of division to heed the example in this chapter.

Third, when God's people worship together, their relationships are strengthened. The Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh pledged to worship always at the tabernacle with the other tribes (verses 27, 29). If you have a collapsed relationship with someone, let God's word challenge you to worship the Lord with them. It is not possible for people to get close to the same God without getting close to one another.

A final principle is that strengthened relationships among God's people can result in benefits to future generations. When our children can see the joy of close Christian fellowship, they too will desire that for their own lives.

"Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love; The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above."

Martin is pastor, Commission Road, Long Beach.

Paul's journey to Jerusalem

By Bert Breland

Acts 20:1-21:16

Paul's departure from Ephesus was sped up by the antagonism of Demetrius. While it seemed an untimely departure, it did give Paul the opportunity to complete the collection that he was taking for the saints in Jerusalem. It does seem odd that Luke didn't give any attention to the collection at this point.



Breland

We know from Paul's writings that he was actively receiving the collection and this certainly would have been important to Luke because of his concern about Jewish and Gentile relations. Nonetheless, Luke, was silent about this special love offering.

While Luke hurried through about one year of Paul's ministry with only six verses, he did pause to tell us a short story about an experience in Troas. It is the story of the young man named Eutychus.

Apparently Paul had been invited to preach the Sunday night service and he became a little long-winded. In fact, he had preached until midnight and Eutychus had fallen asleep. This wouldn't have been so bad or unusual except that he was sitting on the window sill of a third floor window.

Unfortunately for Eutychus, he fell out and not in. It is interesting to note that Luke implied that this happened because they had too many lights or candles burning in the room in which they were meeting. I suppose he didn't want anyone to think that Paul was boring the young man.

Obviously this experience brought the meeting to a close without a benediction. Everyone ran down to the young man and someone immediately pronounced him dead. When Paul arrived he relieved everyone's fears and grief when he assured them that life was still in him.

It is not clear from the text if this was intended to be understood as a miracle or not. Verse nine seems to indicate that the young man was indeed dead while verse ten indicates exactly the opposite. The phrase in verse nine which states that the young man "was taken up dead", could also be interpreted that he was taken up as dead. It could have been a case of hysteria on the part of the first person who approached the young man because his body was so still and lifeless.

However, when Paul arrived he checked a little more closely and discovered that he was only knocked out. On the other hand, if this was a miracle of raising a man from the dead it seems odd that it was given very little attention.

It doesn't fit the pattern for the way that Luke had dealt with miracles earlier in the book. In either event the service was over and everyone went out to eat and fellowship. The next day Paul began again his journey to Jerusalem.

When Paul arrived in Miletus he immediately sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus. Even though in traveling he was unwilling to stop there he had a message that he must share

with them. Paul's message appears to be a defense of his actions and ministry while he was in Ephesus, but a careful reading indicates that Paul's real burden, and primary purpose was to warn them of dangers that were to come. It may be that Paul included a defense of himself because of attacks leveled at him by the Corinthian Church which may have spread to Ephesus.

Paul made it perfectly clear to these leaders that he preached the full gospel to them while he was there. He hadn't held anything back that would have been profitable to them. This leads us to think that one of the charges against Paul was that he had kept such special knowledge for himself, selfishly refusing to share it.

Paul let them know that he had done everything he knew to do and he hoped that they had paid attention because they most likely wouldn't see him again and the day was coming when they were going to need everything that he taught them to combat evil.

Bert Breland is pastor, North Greenwood, Greenwood.

Building up the body of Christ

By Gary G. Berry

Ephesians 4:1-16

These verses give direction to Christians to walk together in unity and thereby strengthen the church.



Berry

The idea of walking in a manner worthy of the Christian calling is expressed in verses 1-3. This "walking about," or Christian conduct and lifestyle, embodies both the private life and personal relationships of Christians.

The believer is responsible for "preserving the unity of the Spirit." Unity is not uniformity brought by coercion. More than a few good Baptists need to learn what the Lord expects of them concerning unity.

Several spiritual graces are listed which contribute to the creation of unity in the body of Christ. The first is lowliness, which means putting self last and Christ first. Because of its very nature, the church may become a stage

for the expression of ego, from the pulpit to the deacons' meeting. Meekness is another of those graces. Meekness is power under control. Along with meekness, there is long-suffering, the ability to endure abuse without striking back. When those qualities are absent from one Christian's life, that individual becomes a potentially divisive part of the body of Christ.

Believers are to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace" (verse 3). Guard the oneness. It is produced by the Spirit, but it must be protected by men. You have the responsibility to preserve the peace.

Paul emphasizes the unity in diversity by pointing out seven "ones" in verse 4-6. First, there is one body. This refers to the church, the Body of Christ. The one body is an example or model for each local body around the world. The "one body" is composed of Christians of various backgrounds who have become one in Christ.

UNIFORM

Regardless of diversity, there must be an overriding unity which enables the church to experience peace and perform its mission. Additionally, there is "One Spirit," or one Holy Spirit, who indwells every born-again believer and brings unity. There is "one hope of your calling," namely, for the full redemption of the believer to be realized when the Lord calls his church home.

There is "one Lord." It is difficult to comprehend how two people can claim to know the same Lord, yet find it impossible to walk together in fellowship. When believers acknowledge the personal lordship of Christ, they have taken a major step in healing division in the body of Christ.

"One faith" (verse 5). This is faith exercised in Jesus Christ. Every man must exercise this faith in order to be saved.

"One baptism" (verse 5). The word baptized means to plunge, submerge, or immerse. The act of baptism portrays what Christ did for our salvation, i.e. death, burial, resurrection.

"One God and Father" (verse 6). The Jewish

Christian and the Gentile Christian are in one family. That is true for the Baptist Christian or the Assembly of God Christian. All born-again believers have one Father. That makes all Christian brothers and sisters in Christ.

Christ has given various gifts to members of his body (verses 7-11). The word "grace" in verse 7 refers to the Spirit's gifts to the church. Many different gifts are bestowed upon the church. When those gifts are used properly, the body functions smoothly and effectively.

A proper understanding of verses 11-12 could revolutionize the church. The same Christ who ascended to heaven gave gifts to men on earth.

The reason he gave such gifts and such men to the church was "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ." The apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors are not the only ministers of the church. They equip the church to minister. Every member is a minister. Every believer is gifted for ministry in the body of Christ.

Berry is pastor, Temple, Hattiesburg.

Power is root of voodoo religions, professor says

By Scott Collins

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — Voodoo worshippers who killed and mutilated 12 people as part of their satanic cult's ritual in Matamoros, Mexico, were "attempting to control the universal powers," according to a Southern Baptist expert on the occult.

"This is all based on magic, and magic is the idea that you can control the universal powers with certain techniques such as sacrificial rituals," said John Newport, vice president for academic affairs at Southwestern Seminary here.

Newport, who wrote the book "Demons, Demons, Demons," said occult groups such as the one involved in the slayings believe their satanic

leader or priest "knows rituals that can control the universal powers and can manipulate them for good or for bad."

"This is obviously a version of that," Newport said. "This occult leader said to these people, 'If we will make this sacrifice to this power we worship, he will protect us.'"

Mexican and U.S. officials discovered the bodies buried in graves on a ranch just across the Mexican border about 20 miles west of Matamoros near Brownsville, Texas.

Authorities found items believed to have been used as part of the ritual. The bodies were found during a drug search April 11, and officials noted "overtones of Santeria," a type of

voodoo practiced in south Florida and the Caribbean featured in the movie "The Believers."

Investigators linked the slayings to a gang leader known as El Padrino, or the godfather. They believe the leader convinced the drug smugglers that the offerings would protect them from harm and allow them to prosper.

"It's all related to power and is based on magic," Newport said. "Magic is as old as mankind."

Archaeologists have uncovered evidence showing that the ancient Canaanites of the Old Testament practiced magic, said Newport. "The Bible is against this. The Israelites were forbidden from going to the witches and from having anything to do with the occult world."

Christians should respond to Satanism by "putting on the armor of God," he said. "Paul claimed the victory against evil powers and principalities."

God is a God of power. He is the true God of power and holiness."

Scott Collins writes for Southwestern Seminary.



Powerline for teens

SOUTHERN BAPTIST RADIO-TV COMMISSION / FORT WORTH, TX 76150

What will I do when my parents die?

QUESTION:

I have recently become aware of the fact that my parents will someday die. I am not really dependent upon them emotionally, but I love them a great deal. When they die, I am afraid I'll never be able to accept it. Can you help me?

ANSWER:

Most of us have strong attachments to our parents. It is natural for us to have some anxieties about being separated from

them. Still, we must realize that this day will come. When it does, grief will usually be our first emotional response. Then comes acceptance: the realization that the loved one is gone and that life must and will go on.

For the Christian family, this task is made easier because of Christ. He promised us that we who believe in him will be reunited to spend a thousand lifetimes in his presence. In this promise we find comfort and eventually peace.

There is a way that you can prepare for this experience. It is to be open and loving with your family now. Share good times as well problems with them. Tell them you love them — while they can appreciate what you are saying and while you can build a strong relationship. Then when you look back across the years, you will be glad that you made the most of the times you had together.

Satanic activity on the increase in every community, says officer

MINNEAPOLIS, Minnesota (EP)

Satanic activities and related crimes are on the increase, particularly in Latin America, Europe, the U.S., and Canada, according to local and national experts. With greater frequency police are connecting crimes to a satanic influence as they learn to recognize signs and symbols at the scenes of many crimes. Until recently, such symbols went largely unnoticed by police.

People involved with satanism are looking for a way to take control of their lives, according to Ted Schwartz, author of *Satanism*, a book that compiles five years of historical research and interviews with law officers, religious groups, Satan worshippers, psychologists, and victims of satanic crimes.

It is this desire for control that satanists have in common with those involved in the New Age Movement. "The motivation is the same," explains Schwartz. "To play god, to be god — somewhere the individual is seeking this kind of control." Unlike the belief system of the Christian faith, which teaches the Christian to "give of himself for others, satanists want to take of others to give to themselves."

Said Sergeant Jon Hinchliff, head of the Minneapolis Special Investigative Division specializing in satanism, "Satanism is a problem, it is growing, and it will continue to be a problem.

There is a driving force to get people to go outside of traditional religions," Hinchliff said he believes there is some form of satanic practice going on in every community in the U.S., ranging from underground satanic churches which may practice human sacrifice to one or two teenagers dabbling in some sort of satanic practice.

Parents must be aware of the powerful lure that satanism has for their adolescent children, Hinchliff warned. People can protect themselves "by becoming informed." There are strong influences on television programs, heavy metal music, and teenage friends who dabble in the occult, sometimes in ways that seem harmless, such as playing the fantasy game "Dungeons and Dragons." To protect your family "talk to (your) kids," urges Hinchliff. "If there's a heavy metal influence, listen to the lyrics. Listen to what they listen to. Spend more time with them. Develop communication."

For parents who already suspect their children are becoming involved with satanism "don't stick your head in the sand," says the policeman, who advocates looking in their rooms for satanic articles such as a satanic bible, black candles, incense, and album covers that have satanic symbols on them. "These are danger signals," said Hinchliff. "Get help for your kids."

Unchurched find worship opportunity at theater

By Joe Westbury

SAN DIEGO (BP) — The marquee above the cinema heralds "Beaches," the latest Hollywood offering. But the main attraction on Sunday mornings is not Bette Midler.

The individual on stage each Sunday is Sam Williams, who presents the Christian gospel in an upbeat, contemporary setting.

Cinema 21 is Del Cerro Baptist Church's latest venture in reaching San Diego's unchurched population.

Not only has the experiment attracted a steady following of 225 in its first four months, but it is now viewed as the pacesetter ministry for churches of all denominations. Cinema 21 was the first church to meet in a theater in San Diego, and others are now following its lead.

The congregation had started three new churches and helped re-start another: It was known for its ministry with a Cambodian church, Spanish Kid's Club, a crisis pregnancy center, a Christian service center, and ministries in three retirement centers and two nursing homes.

"We had been very successful in getting people to attend services in our sanctuary, but we had run out of space," Williams says. The church already had filled its 350-seat auditorium for two morning services, and a third service seemed the only way to expand.

Then Williams had an idea. Rather than adding another service, he decided to look elsewhere for a building with a larger auditorium.

The church then targeted the subculture it wanted to reach. It decided on a 25-45 age group of married and single adults who were established in their careers, owned their residences — and were unchurched.

"We were looking for people who were settling into life and were beginning to feel something was missing — individuals who had a sense that they had 'arrived' but discovered they

wanted more than what the world was offering," Williams said.

After eliminating hotel conference rooms and other options, Williams decided on a setting well-known to area residents — the auditorium of a popular movie theater, Cinema 21, in nearby Mission Valley.

He and Phil Hester, a Southern Baptist newcomer to San Diego who had begun a church growth communications agency, began developing a marketing strategy to reach the target group.

They first chose to advertise on a popular radio station with a light rock music format. Next, they placed ads in the entertainment section — not the religion section — of the Saturday newspaper.

Last, they designed a direct-mail campaign to 10,000 homes in their target group. Even the mailing was unique: a cassette tape featuring Williams' introduction of the church and a brief sermon excerpt that carried practical application.

From the first service, Cinema 21 was a success. The 100 Del Cerro members who began attending as a core group have since been joined by 125 individuals who were not attending anywhere.

Williams works the Cinema 21 service into his already crowded Sunday morning schedule. As soon as the 8:30 a.m. service ends at Del Cerro, he drives 10 minutes to Mission Valley for the 9:45 theater service. Then, he returns to the mother church for the 11 a.m. worship service.

Cinema 21's graded Sunday School classes are taught in rented rooms at a nearby hotel, and Williams teaches an adult Bible study that relates directly to the sermon. Each Sunday, the theater lobby is transformed into a nursery.

The main reason for Cinema 21's success is that it is designed for the person who may never have been in

church before, Williams says.

The service is informal. There is no choir, and music is provided by a piano, two synthesizers, and an acoustic guitar. Easy-to-follow choruses replace hymns for congregational singing. The music director rarely raises his hands to lead.

The future of Cinema 21 will depend on Del Cerro's ability to continue pioneering creative worship techniques — techniques which communicate the gospel to the unchurched population, Williams maintains.

"We're open to any new idea that will enable us to reach the unchurched without compromising biblical principles. The only thing we're not willing to do is stop growing," he says.

Westbury writes for HMB.



SAN DIEGO CHURCH HOLDS SERVICES IN THEATER: Sam Williams, pastor of Del Cerro Baptist Church in suburban San Diego, has boosted his church's attendance by expanding to a local movie theater. By renting the theater on Sunday mornings, the church is able to offer a worship experience to unchurched individuals who would not attend traditional services. The venture has caught the attention of other denominations who are intrigued with the success of the concept. (BP photo by Joe Westbury)

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